

# **COMMUNIST AND LABOURIST PATHS TO "NEW TIMES"**

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This thesis consists solely of my own original work, and all the sources upon which I draw are listed in the footnotes and bibliography.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the changing idea of socialism in post-war Britain with emphasis on the period leading up to, and following from the emergence of Thatcherism as a successful political force. Its focus is upon the interrelation between theory and policy statements in regard to the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain. As necessarily bound up with the interrelation, the New Left's theoretical understanding of Marxist categories of analysis, are discussed in the light of political theory and practice. The main focus is on how Marxism is gradually transformed, especially in the analysis of "New Times", from an ideology of rupture into one of adaptation in the 1980s, an era where belief in collectivism was rejected in favour of the discursive, individual subject which has only a plural identity. A discussion of the importance of Marxist categories of analysis is also attempted in connection with the Left's analysis of the changing political environment. Party Programmes and other statements are used as a basis for examining the theoretical understanding of socialism; the writings of the most influential of the British and Continental theorists are also discussed. The theoretical debates of the 1950s to the 1970s are surveyed as the starting point for an understanding of the political and theoretical approaches adopted in the 1980s. Finally, an assessment of the use of Marxist categories of analysis such as exploitation is undertaken in order to show how the re-thinking of these categories in relation to the idea of socialism has influenced the Left's theory and practice in the epoch of "New Times".

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## PREFACE

This thesis will follow the theoretical and political paths of the two mainstream parties of the Left in Britain, namely the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain. The changing idea of socialism in Britain in the period 1956-1990 will be discussed in the light of those parties' interpretation of societal changes and the categories they use to grasp these shifts theoretically.

We are confronted today with a strange mixture of theoretical and political pessimism and theoretical vagueness with which much of the British Left and its organisations abandon the classical Marxist categories of analysis in their greeting of the homeland of "New Times", an era where the belief in collectivism<sup>1</sup> embodied in the doctrine of "classical Marxism"<sup>2</sup> is no more than a relic of a bygone industrial capitalism, with little relevance to what is seen as a post-industrial epoch. For the needs of this thesis we understand by "classical Marxism" on the one hand, Marx's theory of the class struggle as the motor force of history and the belief in the working class as the agency of socialist change and, on the other hand, the whole corpus of Marxist theory as it was elaborated in Marx's writings and in those of the most influential of the classical Marxists, including Engels, Lenin and Gramsci. All lists of individual theorists are of course open to question, but I shall attempt in the body of my thesis to make clear the lines of argument in virtue of which the writers mentioned are of "classical" status.

In fact most of the twentieth century revolutions and left-wing régimes claim, or at least used to claim until recently, in one way or another, Marxist credentials. Discussions throughout the history of the labour movement were more than often

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<sup>1</sup>The term collectivism here is used in the sense of socialist collective action as opposed to the abstract liberal and conservative individualism and the current left-wing belief in an individualist socialism.

<sup>2</sup>The term "classical Marxism" is in itself an ambiguous one like all concepts that try to capture a totality. The term "classical" can be interpreted in terms of time, i.e. in relation to new interpretations, it can also be seen as an era of thought specific to a certain period, that is in space, eg. classical antiquity as opposed to modernism. Things are not that simple when one tries to identify the "classical" period of a theory that is not divorced from practice, and Marxism is the supreme example of this. Classical can be opposed to new thinking that questions the premises of the founders, as in the case of the revisionism of Marxist theory. Classical can also be seen just as referring to the formulation of Marxism. And finally classical could also be interpreted as including both the original conceptualisations as found in Marx's texts and also the line of development based on these formulations which does not deny the methodological premises and the analytical strength of the original theory in terms of a theoretical tradition and of a strategy for the revolutionary transformation of the existing mode of production.

centred around the interpretation of classical Marxist texts, and the same is still true today. Some of the discussions in the labour movement, namely on social class, the nature of the state, the role of alliances played a decisive part in shaping the movement's political practice. The categories of analysis such as class and exploitation were used by Marx in order to analyse the capitalist system and its relations while the same categories are transformed today in order to attack Marxism as an inadequate theory of scientific explanation of the current era. Hence, the frequent use of references to and quotations from Marx's own works throughout the text is intended to highlight the distance between the interpretation of Marxist categories currently put forward and the classic interpretations of Marx's texts. The current fusion of post-modernism and post-Marxism is well expressed by the magazine of the Communist Party of Great Britain, *Marxism Today*,<sup>1</sup> throughout the 1980s the most vigorous opponent of "classism" (the emphasis on the importance of class struggle) on the British Left, which baptized the era we are living in now as "New Times".

In more concrete terms, taking both the Communist Party of Great Britain and the British Labour Party as a battleground of the idea of socialism we will look at the changing face of each. Thus, the Labour Party, from being a party based on the trade unions for support and implementation of the politics of Labourism, turned from this distinct form of working class politics into a party of the whole 'nation', above class divisions. As for the Communist Party, the shifts in its ideology and politics were more dramatic in nature despite its small size, which by no means was a barrier to its broader intellectual influence. The Communist Party's self-understanding of being a Bolshevik Marxist party in its early days, turned successively first into a Marxist-Leninist, then a Eurocommunist and finally a Post-Marxist one advocating policies ideologically very close to those of the Labour Party to which it was always seeking affiliation.

More specifically, the main focus of the thesis is on how Marxism was gradually turned from an ideology of rupture into one of adaptation in the hands of both the Communist Party and some of the Left British intellectuals theoretical understanding and political practices in the 1980s. The identification of "revisionist" developments is not the sole aim of the thesis but is only used as the primary example of a new articulation of theory and practice, in which Marxist categories of analysis come to be used to justify revisionist positions. The period of the research stretches from 1956 to

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<sup>1</sup> *Marxism Today* printed its final issue in December 1991 (December 1991/January 1992). The reason behind the former Communist Party's -now the Democratic Left-magazine's closure is the search for a new identity which will not have to be exclusively associated with Marxism.

1988; an exception was made for the Communist Party's Manifesto for New Times, which was published in 1989 and for the Labour Party's statements: *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* (May 1989) and *Looking to the Future* (June 1990). The above party statements are not exhaustively discussed in the thesis for the reason that to a great extent they are re-statements of those parties previous elaborations, i.e. like those presented in *Facing Up to the Future* (1988) and the first Reports of the Labour's Policy Review (1988). The arrangement of the Chapters will be as follows:

In Chapter I a definition of the concepts of "revisionism" and "reformism" in Marxist theory and their equal application both to the British Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain's theory and political practice will be explored. The differences between communist and socialist revisionism and between social democracy British style and its Continental equivalent will also be discussed in relation to the question of "old-revisionism" in the Labour Party and revisionism in the Communist Party. "New-revisionism" as the practical/theoretical position of both the Labour Party and the Communist Party in the 1980s will also be defined.

Chapter II will deal with the prehistory of rethinking socialism in Britain. A survey of the most important historical shifts in terms of shaping ideology and politics in both the Labour Party and the Communist Party's history will be discussed. The historical part will be about the birth of the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain, not in terms of their formation as political parties alone, but about their ideological and theoretical influences in every given conjuncture. The contradictory nature of the Labour Party's ideology will be sketched through the debates on the embourgeoisification of the working class and the arguments of the so-called "old-revisionists", that is those Labour Party intellectuals who were more in favour of a meritocratic and welfarist state rather than a socialist one and whose arguments were based explicitly on the rejection of Marxism as a valid explanation of the post-war society. Section two will be a discussion of the Communist Party's history from the mid 1950s up to 1977, the date of the publication of the first Eurocommunist Programme in Britain, an account of how these developments came about after the rejection of Stalinism and the proclamation of a "national road" and "polycentric" policy for socialist advance. *The British Road to Socialism* -the Communist Party's Programme- 1968 and 1977 editions will provide the basis for examining the use of the Marxist categories of analysis by the Communist Party and their move away from classical Marxism. Those two particular editions are important for the manifestation of the ideological shifts in the Communist Party's thought. Section three will be a recapitulation of the Left debates in the period 1950-1978 and the differences and



similarities between the old-revisionist and (Euro)Communist arguments concerning the advance to socialism.

Chapter III will deal in its first section with such theoretical concepts like the nature of the state, the role of social class and the dictatorship of the proletariat in classical Marxism due to the fact that those categories of analysis are going to be compared in the thesis with the new developments in the British Left. Section two will explore the formation of the *New Left* and their critique of Labourism and finally in section three some of the most influential Marxist theorists and their reception in Britain from the late 1950s onwards will be discussed. The reason for taking as a starting point the late 1950s is explained by the focus of the thesis on the development of the Left's understanding of the Marxist categories of analysis from 1956 up to 1988. The theorists were not chosen at random; all of them made their intellectual weight felt in the Left's discourse in one way or another. The analyses of theoretical elaborations by Gramsci, Poulantzas, Carrillo and Aglietta were chosen because they played a decisive role which can be felt in the writings of their 'spokespersons' in Britain today. Gramsci and Carrillo's writings are associated with the British Eurocommunists' belief in the peaceful transition to socialism. Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Poulantzas work on the state became equally dominant in the mid 1970s. Aglietta's writings on capitalist regulation and "Fordism" as a declining mode of regulation played a predominant role in the discussion on the transition to what is named "Post-Fordism", that is a new era of capitalist production that among others demands a fresh approach to old forms of struggle. The British reception of the above theorists and an outline of their theories will be given in this section.

Chapter IV will focus on some of the most influential left interpretations of the emergence and development of "Thatcherism" in Britain. The impact of the miners' strike and what is seen as a new model of production, a "post-Fordist" one which is calling for new practices and ideas and the "new-realist" approach adopted by a part of the labour movement will also be discussed. Stuart Hall, Bob Jessop and Eric Hobsbawm's writings on "Thatcherism" were chosen as examples on the one hand of the reception of Eurocommunism and structuralism in the 1980s, and on the other hand because of the influence their writings have on the Left's strategy.

Chapter V will focus on the practical implications of the theoretical shifts in both the Labour and the Communist Party's policies, with the main emphasis on their proclamation of the era of 'New Times' in their policy review documents and statements. The discussion will be centred round the Labour Party's Policy Review and the Communist Party's documents *Facing Up To The Future* and *Manifesto For New Times*, where the Labour Party endorses the idea of market socialism and makes

a break from Labourism and the Communist Party finally abandons Marxism as outdated. The issues of class, state and the advance to socialism will also be discussed.

Chapter VI will be a discussion of the changing idea of socialism, of how the political implications of the 1970s debates become clear in the 1980s and how the Marxist categories of analysis, especially the category of exploitation, are used to justify a shift to the Right.

The concluding Chapter VII will bring together the main points of the discussions on re-thinking socialism in Britain and their practical/theoretical outcomes.

In conclusion I would like to make the following statement concerning my methodological approach. As becomes clear from the problems we propose to discuss and the above highlighted structure of the thesis and its focus on the question of "revisionism" in both the socialist and the communist parties; more precisely it will attempted to research the differentiations on the one hand in the theoretical positions of those parties and the shifts from the classical Marxist theory towards the construction of a "new" political theory in order to explain changes in modern capitalist society and on the other hand, I will attempt to trace the internal inconsistencies of those new approaches and the differentiations between their general claims and modes of realisation of those claims. As for the first part of the phenomenon of the shift from a classical Marxist theory towards a new articulation this could be characterised as "revisionism", without a moral label attached on this theoretical standpoint i. e., seen merely as a descriptive concept used to sketch/describe these theoretical changes.

The methodological standpoint from which one ought to analyse those political shifts and theoretical inconsistencies needs to be addressed. On the one hand, my intention -in the process of this analysis- is not to counterpose a "true" theoretical position to a "wrong" development of the original theory implying that the latter abandoned all the basic truths of the "original" conceptualisations/formulations. On the other hand, I am confronted with the methodological problem that a series of the theoretical formulations and practices of both the socialist and the communist parties as well as to their adaptation to the new realities use theoretical tools of analysis in which it seems to be lost a great deal of the critical insights of Marxist dialectics. So, my purpose in analysing those theories will not be an attempt to return to historically transcended positions but to pose the question as to what extent the critical dimension of the Marxist theory is kept open and how do the analyses presented in those parties programmes contribute towards the formulation of a modern political theory where the element of criticism is present.



In order to approach the above questions in an adequate methodological manner that was required first a theoretical elaboration from classical Marxism positions in so far as the latter were relevant to the understanding of changes in the positions of Communist and Socialist parties. In this theoretical analysis we included modern Marxist theoreticians including Gramsci, Poulantzas, Miliband and Aglietta.

An historical approach to the developments of both the Communist and Socialist parties in Britain in the period relevant to the scope of the research was adopted and, finally, a critical analysis of official documents and statements published by the Labour Party and the Communist Party in this era which have an interest for the purpose of this thesis in relation to the historical/political frameworks discussed.

## CHAPTER I: REVISIONISM IN PERSPECTIVE

Today he who wants to pass as a socialist, and at the same time would declare war on Marxian doctrine, the most stupendous product of the human mind in the century, must begin with involuntary esteem for Marx. He must begin by acknowledging himself to be his disciple, by seeking in Marx's own teaching the points of support for an attack on the latter, while he represents this attack as a further development of Marxian doctrine. [Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*]<sup>1</sup>

Before developing the concept and the nature of revisionism in both the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain's theory and political practice, a definition of the concept itself becomes necessary. The original debate on revisionism was opened as far back as the adoption of the 1891 Erfurt Programme<sup>2</sup> by the Social-Democratic Party of Germany (SPD); a theoretical debate which was concerned not only with the correctness or incorrectness of particular predictions made by Marx about the capitalist system and its collapse, but also, and in the last analysis, predominantly, with the very core of the Marxist system as a valid *Weltanschauung*. Revisionism as its name implies is about a revision, a rethinking of a theory or a practice previous taken as a valid explanation of reality. Socialist revisionism is the ideological/theoretical foundation of reformism. Although the terms "revisionism" and "reformism" are used as synonyms, they have in fact entirely different meanings. Reformist tendencies -the idea of a non-violent, gradual improvement of existing systems- were to be found in most of the socialist movements long before Bernstein's revisionism appeared on the political scene. But while reformism lacked the theoretical presuppositions for a direct controversy with Marxism, revisionism was largely able to furnish a theoretical basis. Hence in Bernstein's view, revisionism coincided in practice with reformism, though this did not mean that reformists shared revisionist principles. Thus, revisionism in the socialist tradition is about the revision of the classical Marxist theory while reformism involves the pursuing of gradual reforms *within* the system rather than the overall overthrowing of the socio-political system itself in an insurrectionary manner. As Lenin put it:

In the sphere of politics, revisionism did really try to revise the foundation of Marxism, namely, *the doctrine of the class struggle*. Political freedom, democracy and universal suffrage remove the ground for the class struggle -we were told- and render untrue the old

<sup>1</sup>Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1982, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>C.f., Engels's "Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Programme of 1891", in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983.

proposition of the *Communist Manifesto* that the working men have no country. For, they said, since the "will of the majority" prevails in a democracy, one must neither regard the state as an organ of class rule, nor reject alliances with the progressive, social-reform bourgeoisie against the reactionaries.<sup>1</sup>

And as Rosa Luxemburg wrote:

We may say that the theory of revisionism occupies an intermediate place between two extremes. Revisionism does not expect to see the contradictions of capitalism mature. It does not propose to suppress these contradictions through a revolutionary transformation. *It wants to lessen, to attenuate, the capitalist contradictions.* So that the antagonism existing between production and exchange is to be mollified by the cessation of crises and the formation of capitalist combines. The antagonism between capital and labor is to be adjusted by bettering the situation of the workers and by the conservation of the middle classes. And the contradiction between the class state and society is to be liquidated through increased state control and the progress of democracy.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of revisionism to be discussed in this thesis is less relevant to the original debate of the final crisis of capitalism<sup>3</sup> and close associated with the particular debates on the Marxist fundamentals categories of analysis like class, the state and the democratic road to socialism and their relevance to Britain today. This thesis will follow the theoretical formulations and practical politics as those are

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<sup>1</sup>V. I. Lenin, "Marxism and Revisionism", op. cit., p. 29, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, op. cit., p. 32, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup>See Kautsky/Luxemburg/Bernstein's debate on the collapse of the capitalist system; Eduard, Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation*, (first published as *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*, Dietz, Stuttgart, 1899), Schocken Books, New York, 1961; Karl Kautsky, *Selected Political Writings*, edited and translated by Patric Goode, Macmillan, London, 1983; Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1982; G. N. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977; see also, H. Tudor and J. M. Tudor, *Marxism and Social Democracy, The Revisionist Debate 1896-1898*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York, 1988; On the issue of "new-revisionism" see L. Labedz (ed) *Revisionism: Essays on the History of Marxist Ideas*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1962; Erich Fromm (ed), *Socialist Humanism, An International Symposium*, Penguin, London, 1967; Leszek. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Vol. 3, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York, 1987; Stephen Haseler, *The Gaitskellites: Revisionism in the British Labour Party 1951-64*, Macmillan, London, 1969; C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1956; G. Radice, *Labour's Path to Power, The New Revisionism*, Macmillan, London, 1989; for a critique of the "new-revisionist" tendencies in the Labour and the Communist Parties of Britain in the 1980s see Ralph Miliband, "The New Revisionism in Britain", *New Left Review*, no 150, 1985.

expressed in the theory and political practice of the two mainstream political parties of the Left, namely the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain. Historically speaking in Britain the "revisionist" debate had little relevance; the Marxist-orientated Social Democratic Federation of Henry Mayers Hyndman (1842-1921) remained isolated; theoretical viewpoints were remote from the "pragmatic" concerns of the British trade unions. In reality only the emphatically reformist Fabian Society adopted revisionist stand points, just as Bernstein in turn was strongly influenced by the Fabians themselves. Bernstein shared with the social democratic reformism the idea that social democracy was the successor of liberalism, thereby on the one hand anticipating the downfall of the British Liberal Party at the hands of the rising Labour Party and on the other having in mind the domestic political scene in Germany under Wilhelm II, where the liberal tradition of 1848 had altogether receded into the background. Bernstein believed that liberalism "as a great historical movement" had "socialism as its legitimate heir, not only in chronological sequence, but also in its spiritual qualities."<sup>1</sup> Under the influence of the Fabians and the British political system, Bernstein arrived at the optimistic view that liberal institutions are basically different from those of feudalism in that they are "flexible, and capable of change and development" and "do not need to be destroyed, but only to be further developed."<sup>2</sup> Bernstein defined democracy, negatively, as an absence of class government and positively, as "the highest possible degree of freedom for all."<sup>3</sup>, and also as social equality. The early Fabians and later on the "old-revisionists" in Britain, as well as Bernstein inclined towards the principle of a parliamentary democratic system and they rejected any direct forms of democracy. They also held the socialization of the means of production to be superfluous and also undesirable. In Britain this took the form of the debate on dropping Clause IV (4) from the Labour Party Constitution; a symbol of modest public ownership. Bernstein's and the revisionists' moral philosophy was within the framework of Kantianism. Bernstein made the link between Neo-Kantianism and ethical socialism in his analysis of Marx's theory of value; the theory of exploitation seen in terms of the moral wrongfulness of the existence of exploitation in capitalism not as a historical necessity which needs to be overcome. Bernstein saw socialism as primarily a moral not an economic system; that the persuasive power of socialism rests not upon its historical necessity but on the

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<sup>1</sup>Eduard, Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation*, (first published as *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*, Dietz, Stuttgart, 1899), Schocken Books, New York, 1961, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

moral demand which underlies it. As Viktor Adler, a prominent Austrian reformist social democrat (1852-1918), wrote "socialism is not the hypothetical state of the future", but "the sense of what is right", "the striving for equality and justice"<sup>1</sup> which constitutes the enduring elements of the movement which survive all changes in doctrine. (This stress on equality and justice as well as the ethical standpoint of socialism was shared by the "old-revisionists" like Crosland, in Britain in the 1950s). Plekhanov's attack on Neo-Kantianism as a weapon of the bourgeoisie, and his condemnation of the revisionist sympathy for this view as opportunism, have remained established features of the classical Marxist critique of revisionism.<sup>2</sup> Kautsky also took part in the debate; in his *Ethik und materialistische Geschichtsauffassung. Ein Versuch*, (1906)<sup>3</sup> defended Marxism against Neo-Kantianism, as he had done earlier in the revisionist controversy when Bernstein had provocatively entitled the last section of *Evolutionary Socialism*, "Kant against Cant", claiming that the Hegelian dialectic was a comfortable refuge for the cant which sought to get a hold of the working-class movement.<sup>4</sup> The Kant renaissance controversy did not confined to Germany. Jaurès, Labriola and Alfredo Poggi in Western Europe, Berdyaev, Sturve and Tugan-Baranovsky in Russia, all seized upon Neo-Kantian ideas for use in the controversy with Soviet Marxism. Lenin entered in the debate against Neo-Kantianism in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy* (1909)<sup>5</sup>, but the debate did not come to an end. Lukács and Gramsci begun by "correcting" Engels's refutation of the Kantian ethic, by introducing Neo-Hegelian categories to arrive at a philosophically more satisfying solution to the relationship between Marxism and ethics.

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<sup>1</sup>Viktor Adler, *Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky, sowie Briefe von und an Ignaz Auer, Eduard Bernstein, Adolf Braun, Heinrich Dietz, Friedrich Ebert, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Herman Müller und. Paul Singer, Gesammelt und erläutert von F. Adler*, Wien 1954, p. 289; (letter dated March 3, 1899), cited in C. D. Kerning, *Marxism Communism and Western Society*, vol. III, Herder and Herder, New York, 1973, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>G. N. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977; G. N. Plekhanov, "Bernstein und der Materialismus", *Neue Zeit*, 16, 1, 1897/98:545-55..

<sup>3</sup>See, Karl Kautsky, *Ethik und materialistische Geschichtsauffassung. Ein Versuch*, Stuttgart, 1906, English translation: *Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History*, Chicago III, 1907, see also excerpts in Karl Kautsky, *Selected Political Writings*, edited and translated by Patrick Goode, Macmillan, London, 1983, ch. 3.

<sup>4</sup>See Eduard, Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation*, op. cit.; Eduard, Bernstein, "Back to Kant", *Neue Zeit* 16, 2, 1897/98, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup>V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Foreign Languages Publication House, Moscow, 1952.



All these philosophical questions had very little impact in Britain but still the concept of "revisionism" can be proved helpful in the analysis of the theoretical and political developments in the Labour and the Communist parties.

A fundamental question is whether or not the concept of "revisionism" can be applied equally to the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain. The answer to this question will be explored below.

Revisionism in the Labour Party is the revision of certain aspects of the contradictory ideology of Labourism; in the Communist Party of Great Britain it is closely related with the issue of the revision of the classical Marxist theory. Labourism is taken here as a particular current of the Left's policy in Britain which in itself is constituted from a number of different strands, i. e., ethical socialism, Marxism, Fabianism, and whose primary concern is the defence and advancement of the interests of labour *within* capitalism, as opposed to revolutionary socialism, which looks to the replacement of capitalism and the building of a classless society.<sup>1</sup> This kind of labourist policy used traditionally to be advocated in Britain by the Labour Party. As John Gollan, the former General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain, summarised it in 1978:

As in fact, Labour Government has not challenged the social basis of capitalism, there was no need to come into collision with the foundation on which that social basis rests, the possession of state political power by the capitalist class.

Politics in the reformist strategy is presented as the mere winning of a parliamentary majority. Everything else is then left in the hands of the Labour Government increasingly separated from the movement. The role of the working class party is relegated to that of a periodical electoral machine with the trade unions fulfilling a solely economic function. But for a revolutionary strategy politics is the means of winning political power.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Labourism", according to Keir Hardie's speech at the founding conference of the Labour Representation Committee, was referred to as that body of working class political 'theory and practice which accepted the possibility of social change within the existing framework of society; which rejected the revolutionary violence and action implicit in Chartist ideas of physical force; and which increasingly recognised the working of political democracy of the parliamentary variety as the practical means of achieving its own aims and objectives.' (reference in David Coates, *The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1975, p. 6, cited from J. Saville, "The Ideology of Labourism", in R. Benewick *et al*, *Knowledge and Belief in Politics*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1973, p. 215).

<sup>2</sup>John Gollan, *Reformism and Revolution* with a memoir by Gordon McLennan, Communist Party, London, October 1978, p. 6.

Communist revisionism -that is the Communist Party's revisionist tendencies- refers back to the 1950s when the party moved away from the tradition of "orthodox"<sup>1</sup> Marxism towards the policy of the national road to socialism following the footsteps of Togliatti's Italian path<sup>2</sup> which had as a result the adoption of Eurocommunism in the 1970s and post-Marxism in the 1980s; a long march that led the party far closer to the reformist position of Labourism to which it used to be so critical of in its early days.

To sum up, for the needs of this thesis "revisionism" is understood the attempt of the Communist Party, on the one hand to revise Marxist theory from a revolutionary towards an evolutionary and reformist one and, on the other hand, the attempt by the Labour Party to revise its Labourism, that is its 1918 belief in "the representation of the interests of the working class in the country and the parliament", together with its commitment to public ownership, towards the management of the state in the interests of the 'nation', above classes and class interests and away from any idea of nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, as this was promised in Clause IV(4) of the Labour Party's Constitution. By "old-revisionism" I mean the elaboration of the above theory in the 1950s and early 1960s in the writings of such theorists as C. A. R. Crosland<sup>3</sup> and its adaptation by leaders like Hugh Gaitskell<sup>4</sup> who attempted to remodel the Labour Party and free it from its modest

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<sup>1</sup>By "orthodox" Marxism I mean the policies of the Third Communist International. It was in existence from 1919 to 1943. Its First Congress was held in Moscow on March 2-6, 1919, when it adopted a Manifesto in which it was pointed out that the Comintern was the heir to the ideals of Marx and Engels as expressed in the Manifesto of the Communist Party. "Orthodox" Marxism is often associated with the ideology of Marxism-Leninism or as it is also known as Stalinism which was spread first by the Comintern and after the World War II by the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau). It is associated with the debate on the defence of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the question of party centralism. (Although there are also other interpretations of what "orthodox" Marxism really is about, cf., Georg Lukács, "What is Orthodox Marxism", in *History and Class Consciousness*, Merlin Press, London, 1971).

<sup>2</sup>Namely the doctrine of "polycentrism" and the belief in the national road to socialism both of which are going to be discussed later on in this thesis in relation to Eurocommunism. See Palmiro Togliatti, "L' Intervista a Nuovi argomenti", no 20, May-June 1956.

<sup>3</sup>See especially C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1956, a thorough and unapologetic presentation of the revisionist case. It emphasised the extent to which traditional goals had been achieved, or shown to lack significant content pointing the need for a rethinking of socialist means.

<sup>4</sup>Hugh Gaitskell elected Labour Leader after Attlee's retirement in December 1955. Gaitskell's victory can be interpreted as a victory for revisionism. He was one of the architects of the so-called consensus politics of the fifties. During the 1950s the Tories governed Britain, but there was growing convergence between Tory and Labour policies, symbolised by *The Economist's* invention of 'Mr Butskell', a

labourist-socialist commitments. "Old-revisionism" involved a radical discontinuity in Labour doctrine, but not a total break with what had gone before. The element of continuity lay in the fact that there had always been a strong current in party thought that had stressed the positive attachment of the party to parliamentary democracy.

The adoption of Keynesian techniques and the growth of the Welfare State suggested that predictions of capitalist collapse were misguided, and that, while the mixed economy contained unacceptable imbalances of wealth and status, these could be eradicated without a fundamental attack on existing structures. This was represented as an attempt to come to terms with new developments, basically through an admission that much had been achieved without a drastic extension of public ownership.<sup>1</sup>

The first elaborations of this position took place under the auspices of the Fabian Society. A series of discussions led to the publication, in 1952, of *New Fabian Essays*.<sup>2</sup> Some of the contributors -Crosland, Jenkins and Albu- were to become leading exponents of the revisionist case. The revisionists' pluralist-democratic commitment and their assessment of post-war developments led to the conclusion that significant economic changes could be obtained through existing institutions. This rejected the idea that socialism was an ideal goal to be approached through a gradual transformation of society. Rather, social reform consisted of the continuing adaptation of an inevitably pluralistic society in order to realise more fully ideals such as equality and individual liberty. Such a re-interpretation of Labour's commitment to socialism plus the optimistic economic judgement greatly reduced the contribution of public ownership measures.<sup>3</sup>

"Old revisionism" in the 1950s was about the rejection of class politics in the light of the "affluent society" and the Labour's repeated electoral misfortunes.

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composite figure of Labour's right-wing leader Hugh Gaitskell (predecessor of Butler and shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer) and the 'left-wing' Tory R. A. Butler (Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer 1951-55); see *The Economist*, 13 February 1954; Ian Birchall, *Bailing Out the System, Reformist Socialism in Western Europe: 1944-1985*, London, Bookmarks, 1986.

<sup>1</sup>As Aneurin Bevan put it in "The Fatuity of Coalition", *Tribune* 13 June 1952, p. 1: "The second danger to which we shall be exposed comes from what may be called the *Fresh Thinkers*...Perhaps a better term would be *Socialist Revisionists*. These are people who want to substitute novel remedies for the struggle for power in the state. They suggest that an extension of public ownership is an old-fashioned and outmoded idea.", in Stephen Haseler, *The Gaitskellites, Revisionism in the British Labour Party 1951-64*, Macmillan, London, 1969, p. 61, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>See *New Fabian Essays*, Turnstile Press, London, 1952.

<sup>3</sup>See David Howell, *British Social Democracy, A Study in Development and Decay*, Croom Helm, London, 1976.



I call "new-revisionism" the process of rethinking socialism in Britain in the 1980s and especially the period after the second Conservative electoral victory in June 1983. The "new-revisionist" debate has many similarities with the "old-revisionist" one as far as the former is concerned with such issues as "class politics". There is a great difference, though, and this is related to the rejection of Marxism which now is based on a Marxist language, as opposed to the old-revisionist debate which was explicitly anti-Marxist. Old-revisionism was an attempt to revise "corporate socialism" as this was expressed in the 1945 Labour Government in the form of Keynesianism and nationalization. Labour's anti-Marxism in the 1950s was overt in the writings of the old-revisionists like Crosland. "New-revisionism" in the Labour Party is an attempt to back down of any socialist commitment, to roll back the left-wingers influence on the party and to bring in a market oriented economy where the Labour Party will play the role of the manager of the capitalist system once again. Where the old and the new revisionist thinking meets is the point in the belief in a mixed economy, the rejection of the role of class struggle in history, the belief in the capacity of capitalism in overcoming its crisis, and the notion that present day capitalism is less class ridden than ever. Marxist new-revisionism of the 1980s is of a different kind and is more concerned with the vision of the socialist project on the one hand and the understanding and explanation of the development of capitalist society on the other. Marxist categories of analysis in the 1980s are used in order to justify the abandonment of left positions by the "new-revisionists". Why should this happen and how does it influence Left theory and practice and their conception of socialism?

In order to be able to understand these developments this thesis will start from the British Left's understanding of the changing social structure in the 1960s and 1970s, how they use Marxism and the advance to socialism and their perspectives and ideals.

## CHAPTER II: TRANSITION TO "NEW TIMES"

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A historical account of the British Left's changing understanding of Socialism should take into consideration the history of their main representatives in the spheres of both ideas and politics, namely the Communist Party of Great Britain and the British Labour Party. Both parties were formed at the beginning of the 20th century. The Labour Party was created in 1900 as a federation of a number of trade unions with various socialist groups - the Marxists of the Social Democratic Federation (the SDF was formed in 1881 to revive Chartist ideas), the evolutionaries of the Fabian Society, and the ethical socialists of the Independent Labour Party (the ILP was formed by Keir Hardie in 1893).<sup>1</sup> The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was founded in 1920-1921. Its forerunner was the British Socialist Party (BSP), which was founded in 1911 by the merging of the Social Democratic Federation<sup>2</sup> with dissidents from the Independent Labour Party. The Communist Party of Great Britain's membership consisted of an amalgam of the Marxists of the British Socialist Party, the National Unemployed Workers Committee Movement, the syndicalists of the Labour College Movement, and the National Guilds League.<sup>3</sup> Both parties' ideologies were predominantly in the tradition of British syndicalism and more precisely in the tradition of the shop stewards' movement. Both parties were advocating socialism although their interpretation of the latter differed.

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<sup>1</sup>See Henry Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party: 1880-1900*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965; Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, Macmillan, London, 1978; Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein, *The Labour Party - a Marxist History*, Bookmarks, London, 1988; Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought, a History*, Croom Helm, London, 1985.

<sup>2</sup>The Social Democratic Federation founded in 1883 (or more strictly in 1881 as the Democratic Federation) renamed Social-Democratic Party in 1908, and enlarged with some members of the Independent Labour Party and some local socialist clubs and organisations to become in 1911, the British Socialist Party. For a sympathetic approach to the early history of the Communist Party of Great Britain, see James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Volume One: Formation and Early Years, 1919-1924*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1968; James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, Volume Two: The General Strike, 1925-1927*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1969.

<sup>3</sup>See Henry Pelling, *The British Communist Party: A Historical Profile*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1958; L. J. MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party: Its Origins and Development until 1929*, MacGibbon and Kee, London, 1966; Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-21: The Origins of British Communism*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969.

## II. 1. THE CASE OF THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY

### II. 1. (i) Introduction

The British Labour Party -unlike other European working class parties- had no precise ideology to guide its politics and policies, at least in its early days. Finally in 1918 Sidney Webb's pamphlet *Labour and the New Social Order*<sup>1</sup> was adopted as the Labour Party's Constitution. The ideas of Marxism, Fabianism and ethical socialism were interwoven in this Constitution of a Party predominantly based on its trade union basis for support. In reality the Labour Party was the creation of the Trade Unions Movement and was meant -at least in theory- "to represent their interests in the Parliament and the country".

The Labour Party's interpretation of socialism was predominantly influenced by *Fabianism*.<sup>2</sup> The Fabian Society was formed in 1884 and attracted a large following. George Bernard Shaw was one member who tried unsuccessfully to convert the Fabian Society to Marxism.<sup>3</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb came to fill the theoretical vacuum with their positivist theory about the organisation of society and their belief in the gradual change towards a well-ordered and harmonious society. They rejected Marx's theory of value and substituted it with their theory of rent. Capitalists were not the exploiters but the parasites who lived on workers' talents and productivity. Fabian socialism was about an egalitarian society, the subordination of the individual good to the common will, and the replacement of idleness with efficiency. The means to achieve these aims was by State planning. Public ownership was seen as the main weapon for successful distributional politics. As Bernard Shaw put it :

The Socialism advocated by the Fabian Society is State Socialism exclusively.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Labour and the New Social Order*, was written by Sidney Webb, and was passed in amended form by the 1918 Labour Conference, see also Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein, *The Labour Party -a Marxist History*, Bookmarks, London, 1988; Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought, a History*, Croom Helm, London, 1985.

<sup>2</sup>For the ideas of *Fabianism*, see G. Foote, op. cit., pp. 24-33.

<sup>3</sup>Although it is still a matter of debate if Shaw was ever a Marxist himself; see G. B. Shaw, *Bernard Shaw and Karl Marx: A Symposium*, Random House, New York, 1930. This contains the early debates on Marx's theory of value in the Fabian Society, ref. in Foote, op. cit., p. 38; see also *ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>George Bernard Shaw, "Report on Fabian Policy", *Fabian Tract*, no 70, London, 1896, p. 5, reference in Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought, a History*, Croom Helm, London, 1985, (second edition 1986), p. 28.

The State according to Fabianism was fundamentally neutral, despite its class character. It could be used for collectivist purposes and the advocacy of the common good. According to Fabianism the state machine and institutions:

will continue to be used against the people by the classes until it is used by the people against the classes with equal ability and equal resolution.<sup>1</sup>

As for the road to socialism, this had to be won through the Labour Party's parliamentary majority and should also be rooted in political democracy.

For the Labour Party, it must be plain. Socialism is rooted in political democracy; which necessarily compels us to recognise that every step towards our goal is dependent on gaining the assent and support of at least a numerical majority of the whole people.<sup>2</sup>

Gradualism, planning and a meritocratic society were the elements of Fabian socialism. Their utopian dream of a well ordered and harmonious society found its topos in Stalin's USSR and Beatrice and Sidney Webb were more than eager to praise its Utopos. Fabian Socialism provided the first tools of a theoretical justification of Labourism and rejection of Marxism.

But the Labour Party's ideology was also influenced by *ethical socialism*.<sup>3</sup> In the utopian vision of ethical socialists -like Edward Carpenter and William Morris- the collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange was interpreted in the light of early Christian doctrines of non-conformity. Robert Owen's *New Lanark*,<sup>4</sup> and William Morris's<sup>5</sup> vision of a socialist world were their landmarks for a vision of dignity and craftsmanship which would have to replace the egoistic, individualistic seeking after wealth which, according to them, characterised the

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<sup>1</sup>George Bernard Shaw, "The Impossibilities of Anarchism", *Fabian Tract*, no 45, London, 1893, p. 27, ref. in Foote, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Sidney Webb, *Labour Party Annual Conference Report*, 1923, p. 178, ref. in Foote, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>For the ethical socialism strand in the Labour Party's thought see references in Foote, op. cit. and Cliff *et al*, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup>New Lanark - a cotton mill and village near the Scottish town of Lanark built in 1784. From 1800 to 1829 Robert Owen directed it as a managing partner and transformed it into a model working place where drunkenness, police, magistrates, charity, were unknown. See Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, p. 45; Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring, Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, especially Part III.

<sup>5</sup>See William Morris, *News from Nowhere* and *Selected Writings and Designs*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1986.

dehumanised values of competitive capitalism. Edward Carpenter (1844-1929) was the main exponent of the ideas of ethical socialism.<sup>1</sup> Carpenter was opposed to the conformism of dominant values. It was not capital and private property, which were the enemies, but the irresponsible individual capitalists. Ethical socialism was about the little man who lived in the slums. It was about State ownership which was seen as the means for the fulfilment of a New Jerusalem. Robert Blatchford (1851-1943) argued that what was needed was de-industrialisation as a remedy to the dehumanised factory system. He described the process of state ownership as nationalisation, not socialisation, and he went even further to argue for a self-sufficient "little England" as opposed to the imperialists' desire of a Great Britain expanding across the globe. As Blatchford put it:

We want Britain for the British. We want the fruits of labour for those who produce them.<sup>2</sup>

The working class and the nation were one and the same thing to him; the working class of other nations were potential enemies. His memoirs recall that at the founding of the Independent Labour Party: "we were Britons first and Socialists next."<sup>3</sup>

*Marxism* as a theory was introduced into the Labour Party ideology via the writings of Harold Laski (1893-1950). Laski was a professor of Political Science in the London School of Economics and his early writings were more in the liberal tradition.<sup>4</sup> He moved to Marxism after the rise of Fascism. Laski saw the State as:

...an instrument not of the community as a whole -that is an abstract entity devoid of intellectual expression- but of the class which owns the instruments of economic power.<sup>5</sup>

But, despite the Marxist influence, Laski's theory was closer to utilitarianism than Marxism. In Laski's theory there is no talk of an abolition of the State.

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<sup>1</sup>See Edward Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1918

<sup>2</sup>Robert Blatchford, *Britain for the British*, Clarion Press, London, 1902, p. 119; see also his *Merrie England*, Clarion Press, London, 1894.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Blatchford, *My Eighty Years*, Clarion Press, London, 1931, p. 196, cited in Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein, *The Labour Party -a Marxist History*, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>4</sup>See Harold Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1925.

<sup>5</sup>Harold Laski, *Parliamentary Government in England*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1938, p. 331.



*Corporate socialism*<sup>1</sup> was better suited to the mixture of contradictory discourses which are articulated in what is called Labourism. Herbert Morrison (1888-1965) was its main exponent. Morrison's conception of corporate public enterprise was the outcome of syndicalist and guild socialist ideas of functional government and of the Fabian visions of an administrative socialism. Managers were to play the vital role in the Public Boards of the nationalised industries. The 1945 electoral triumph of the Labour Party materialised the ideas of corporate socialism in the form of a state-regulated capitalism.

As already mentioned, the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain started from different directions in the labour movement. Their nominal aim was socialism. The Labour Party was never a Marxist Party although at some periods of its history it was influenced by Marxist ideas advocated by its Marxist members. The Communist Party was never a Social Democratic Party. Its mere desire to affiliate to the Labour Party was not the outcome of a crisis of identity, quite the contrary. But things changed dramatically during both parties' historical process. It will be argued in this thesis that the Labour Party, from the party of the trade unions advocating the transformation of capitalism, ended up first of all by becoming a manager of capitalism and afterwards a part of the system it proposed to transform. The Communist Party in its formation years was claiming revolutionary positions, then it moved towards reformist ones, latter into Eurocommunism and finally ended up as a supporter of the Labour Party's reformism. The fate of both parties' idea of socialism met at the crossroads of democracy in general.

How did it happen that from the idea of socialism and labourism these two parties ended up with *popular socialism* especially after the evolution of "Thatcherism"? What sort of changes in the 1960s and 1970s made them re-think their policies and theories and adopt this attitude? In order to answer these question we will start from the aftermath of the 1959 Labour electoral defeat and we will move on to analyse the changes in politics and conceptual frameworks in both parties developments.

## II. 1.(ii) *MUST LABOUR LOSE?*:

### THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY: 1959-1978

The electoral misfortunes of the Labour Party in the 1950s brought forward the issue of the Labour Party's concept of socialism. "*Must Labour Lose?*" That was the question asked after the 1959 Labour electoral defeat. The answer then appeared to be

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<sup>1</sup>See G. Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought*, op. cit.

positive: "Yes". Similar questions were posed to the Left after the 1987 election and similar answers given. In order to understand the recent process of the Left rethinking of socialism and socialist values in Britain it is important to sketch their profile in the 1960s and 1970s.

The theoretical debates in the period 1959-1978 were concentrated on the changing face of British society and were critical of the role of the Labour Party. Questions such as the *class base* of Labour, the corporatist strategy ("technocratic collectivism"), the role of the State, criticism of Labourism, syndicalism, social reformism, the idea of Socialism and the role of the left-wing parties were posed.<sup>1</sup>

The most influential work on Labour's 1959 electoral defeat was the interpretation given by Mark Abrams, Richard Rose and Rita Hinden in their book, *Must Labour Lose?* (1960). This book was the outcome of a small sample survey carried out on behalf of the *Socialist Commentary*.<sup>2</sup>

The central argument was that Labour would lose because it had not taken into consideration the changes in society after the 1945 affluence boom. Rita Hinden in her essay on "The Lessons For Labour" argued that:

Support from its two great appeals of the past is waning. Its class appeal is being undermined, because the working class itself, even the lower categories within it, is emerging from its earlier unhappy plight; manual workers are gradually moving over into the white-collar category, which does not identify itself with the unskilled or semi-skilled labourers; and many, particularly among the young, are now crossing the class frontiers into the middle class.<sup>3</sup>

The "cloth-cap" image of Keir Hardie's days was no longer appropriate; full employment, stronger trade unions, increased earnings, improved education and leisure, welfare services, home-ownership, social mobility and the decline of the old working class ethos of "solidarity and mutual help" were the themes stressed by the

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<sup>1</sup>See Cf., Michael Barratt-Brown, "The Welfare State in Britain", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1971; Michael Barratt-Brown, *From Labourism to Socialism: the Political Economy of Labour in the 1970s*, Bertrand Russel Peace Foundation, Nottingham, 1972; Ian Birchall, *Bailing Out the System, Reformist Socialism in Western Europe, 1944-85*, Bookmarks, London, 1986; Ken Coates, "Gradualism and the Labour Party", *The Spokesman*, October 1970; Ken Coates, "Socialists and the Labour Party", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1973; Eric Heffer, *The Class Struggle in Parliament, A Socialist View of Industrial Relations*, Victor Collancz, London, 1973.

<sup>2</sup>The survey on the underlined causes of Labour's electoral misfortunes, was carried out by Mark Abrams, of Research Services Ltd, who had been invited to do so for the *Socialist Commentary*.

<sup>3</sup>Rita Hinden, "The Lessons For Labour" in *Must Labour Lose?* by Mark Abrams, Richard Rose and Rita Hinden, Penguin, London, 1960, p. 119.

so-called "revisionists" who subscribed enthusiastically to the *embourgeoisement* <sup>1</sup> thesis:

...its [the Labour Party's] promise to conquer economic distress and crises by planning based on public ownership mean little now that the terrible economic depressions of the past appear to have been left behind.<sup>2</sup>

Rita Hinden further on in her essay asked the question:

Can there be any hope for the Labour Party under these circumstances?<sup>3</sup>

The answer is given partly by her, and partly by others like Crosland. Let's first see what Hinden had to say:

...can a political party build itself on anything but self-interest? When the working class allied itself with the socialists it was not, after all, through idealism; they were moved primarily by their own desperate need. Perhaps human nature in the mass will always be primarily selfish, acquisitive, competitive...<sup>4</sup>

In plain words this was a call for the capturing of the vote of the non-manual workforce, that is those people of whom it was believed that "they have outgrown the label" of the "proletariat".

C. A. R. Crosland put the matter slightly differently. In his Fabian essay, "Can Labour Win?" (May, 1960), he criticised the trade unions, elaborating on the distinction between "*objective class position*" and "*subjective*" appraisals of class, and warned that the close identification of the Labour Party with the working class was a "*clear political liability*". He called for a "broader and more catholic base".

At any rate, under present circumstances one can state dogmatically that if Labour continues to be thought of as an essentially proletarian and

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<sup>1</sup>See "The Unproletarian Society", *The Economist*, May 16, 1959; James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution*, John Day Company, Inc, New York, 1941; John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, (1958), Hamish Hamilton, London, 2nd rev. ed. 1969; C. A. R. Crosland "The Transition From Capitalism", in *New Fabian Essays*, edited by R. H. S. Crossman, Turnstile Press, London, 1952; R. H. S. Crossman "Labour in the Affluent Society", *Fabian Tract*, no 325, The Fabian Society, London, 1960.

<sup>2</sup>Rita Hinden, "The Lessons For Labour" in *Must Labour Lose?*, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 120.



one class party, it faces the certainty of steady decline; for 'in a few years' time at least half the population will be middle class in occupation and a good deal more than that will be middle class in aspiration.' *Any Socialist party must of course be based predominantly on the working class; but it should not be so uniquely identified with it as positively to rebuff those who belong to another class.* To be so identified is not only imprudent, it also betrays a fundamental socialist principle: for a 'classless' society will never be achieved through a wholly class-oriented instrument. The object must be to present ourselves as a broadly - based, national, people's party.<sup>1</sup>

"A broadly-based, national, people's party" across classes, away with all the great arches of class against class and in with a class-neutral ideology for all the people as citizens of the same nation, was the remedy offered by Crosland *et al.*

The other cause of Labour's electoral defeat was -according to the "old revisionists" interpretations- the Labour Party's own *internal divisions*. The advice to the Labour Party was to try to show itself as a responsible, united alternative party of government. This is the so-called "*swing of the pendulum*" theory of electoral behaviour according to which the main function of the Opposition is not to oppose, that is to attack the government or to crusade for radical causes, but to provide the alternative government which can expect under normal circumstances to take office under the next general election, without any violent break in the existing policy framework.

The question of what social class was in the 1960s was related to the debate on the changing nature of capitalism and the rise of the affluent society. Crosland argued that people now (1960s) lived in a qualitatively different society, a post-capitalist one, or what he quite wrongly -as he confessed in *The Future of Socialism* (1956)- named, "*Statism*"<sup>2</sup> The Bible of the old-revisionists thinking was his book *The Future of Socialism* (1956),<sup>3</sup> where he rejected the classical Marxist analysis of class and moved closer to the Weberian concept of status. Basing his analysis on income differentiations, that is on the relations of distribution and not on economic positions, that is on the relations of production, he argued that the working class had become

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Crosland, "Can Labour Win?", *Fabian Tract*, no 324, May, 1960, p. 20, emphasis in the original. (The text into inverted commas is taken from Mark Abrams, "Why Labour Loses Elections", *Socialist Commentary*, May 1960, -F.D).

<sup>2</sup> "...therefore seems misleading to continue talking about 'capitalism' in Britain...I once rashly joined in the search for a suitable name, and in *New Fabian Essays* called the new society 'statism'...Nevertheless, I believe that our present society is sufficiently defined, and distinct from classical capitalism, to require a different name." in C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1956, p. 67, see also C. A. R. Crosland "The Transition From Capitalism", in *New Fabian Essays*, edited by R. H. S. Crossman, Turnstile Press, London, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> See C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1956.

more affluent in the post-war years and consequently adopted middle class positions and attitudes. According to him the manual workforce which traditionally served as the electoral basis of Labour was shrinking year after year. Growing home and vehicle ownership, more consumer goods and facilities for the working class household moved its beneficiaries to the middle ground of politics.

The above analysis implied that it was time for those who still cherished the classical Marxist theory of class struggle to replace it with the revisionist theory of class cooperation and harmony. Liberal ideas of citizenship came back into fashion. The notion of "*class harmony*" advanced by Crosland and wholeheartedly adopted by the leader of the Labour Party, Hugh Gaitskell, was entirely based on the idea of a non-divided community of individuals who belong to the same nation, or a society without major differences in class interests -although individual interests still existed in terms of status positions- and was basically grounded on the idea of "*equality*". Crosland argued that gross inequalities had become a thing of the past in post-war Britain due to Labourist policies on income distribution. Even more, he traced a qualitatively different attitude in the top managerial positions. Capitalists simply did not exist as exploiters of labour power, their transformed role was that of a manager who manages a public or private company, with a differentiated attitude towards his employees. Most of Crosland's ideas were influenced by Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* (1941).<sup>1</sup> The other interesting thing is the timing; Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* was published in the heyday of the Cold War (October 1956). His analysis of "*statism*" and Crossman's writings on affluence and nationalisation as well as the bulk of the revisionist thinking should be seen in the light of neo-colonialism, the decline of Britain's position as a world power and, last but not least, the Cold War atmosphere.<sup>2</sup> The debate on the post-industrial society was an attempt

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<sup>1</sup>James Burnham in *The Managerial Revolution* (John Day Company, Inc., New York, 1941) argued that the place of capitalists in advanced capitalist societies was taken by a new class, the managerial class. Managers' attitudes were different from the old style capitalists' ones whose decisions concerning the enterprise were dictated solely by the pursuit of profit for the simple reason that their relationship to property was one of ownership. Managers have the control of the enterprise which in almost all the cases is the property of a number of shareholders. What the managers want is the establishment of good industrial relations in order to maximize profits and secure their own position but their attitude towards employees is not the old cut-throat capitalist one. Crosland in *The Conservative Enemy*, (Jonathan Cape, London, 1962, p. 91-92) and also in *The Future of Socialism*, (Jonathan Cape, London, 1956, p. 70) adopted the thesis of the divorce between ownership and management and he also argued that profit is no longer the driving force of capitalism (*The Future of Socialism*, op. cit., p. 35).

<sup>2</sup>Neo-Colonialism and the decline of Britain's position as a colonial power especially after the Second World War had their impact on the revisionists and left thinking. The

to show that the western capitalist democratic state was better and more efficient than the communist Stalinist Eastern European alternative.

Relatively better living standards for a growing number of the population and especially for the "underdog", topped with a change in electoral fortunes for the Labour Party were interpreted as signs of an emerging demarcation and dealignment together with a decline in class consciousness. The "Mixed Economy" made it unnecessary to struggle for the overcoming of the capitalist system. The state was there to eliminate class divisions with the creation of a meritocratic society where everyone would be able to climb the social ladder and change his/her class position, where at the end of the day the divisions were not based on class positions but on status differentiations and class harmony would be achieved.

These were the sorts of arguments advanced by the "old revisionists". Their political origin could be traced back to Bernstein's<sup>1</sup> rejection of an open class war, the dictatorship of the proletariat and, most important, his rejection of revolution and his belief in the transformation of the capitalist system through parliamentary struggle. This incremental theory was fully absorbed and enhanced within the liberal British tradition with such concepts as equality, freedom and citizenship.

The debate on ends and means was nothing more than the "theoretical" rejection of Marxism and the inevitability of the overthrowing of capitalism. Marxism as a theory of class struggle had to be defeated not only practically but also theoretically by proving that it was both inadequate to analyse the new conjuncture and inappropriate for the changing social structure which was based on collaboration and not on confrontation between the classes.

Crosland in "Can Labour Win?" began with the Weberian distinction between *the ethic of ultimate ends* and *the ethic of responsibility*.<sup>2</sup> The ethic of ultimate ends characterizes people who are not responsibly interested in political power and consequently their actions have a value *per se* unlike those who follow the ethic of

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Cold War atmosphere with the Red Empire on the one hand and the US imperialism on the other had its impact on the British intellectuals of the Left who were trying to break from both powers' ideological and political influence.

<sup>1</sup>See especially Edward Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation*, (first published as *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*, Dietz, Stuttgart, 1899), translated from the German by Edith C. Harvey (1909), reprinted by Schocken Books, New York, 1961; for a critique of Bernstein's revisionism see Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, (1900, 2nd ed, 1908), Pathfinder Press, New York, 1982; see also, David McLellan, *Marxism After Marx, An Introduction*, Macmillan, London, 1980.

<sup>2</sup>See Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated, and edited with an Introduction by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, London-Melbourne, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, pp. 77-129.

responsibility and hold themselves accountable for the consequences of their actions. Crosland argued that the latter attitude should be adopted by the Labour Party and its primary concern should be to win political power; hence internal differences should be subordinated to this task.

*Socialism* was not seen as an *end*, as the real movement of history but as a *means* for the achievement of a more equal society. *Freedom* was a *means* to achieve equality. *Equality* was the *ultimate end* for social democrats to strive for. For Crosland the word "means" was used to describe the essentially institutional changes required to realise certain "ends", the latter being understood as simply "describing values which might or might not be embodied in, or determine the character of a particular society".<sup>1</sup>

The *embourgeoisement* thesis or what *The Economist* called: *deproletarianisation*<sup>2</sup> of the manual working class on purely economic grounds generated a heated discussion among the Left.

John H. Goldthorpe and David Lockwood (1962) set out to investigate if the "embourgeoisement" thesis was valid and particularly to reverse the assumption that the working-class adopted middle class attitudes, values and modes of behaviour. Through their analysis they came to adopt a middle way. As they put it:

...that the affluent manual worker is becoming assimilated to the middle class - is only one way of interpreting current changes in the class structure. An alternative and in many ways possible view is that what is taking place is a process of convergence between the two classes. On the one side, the new white collar segment of the middle class is manifestly less attached to an unqualified belief in the virtues of individualism and more prone to collective trade union action. On the other, the more affluent and less traditional sections of the working class, while still committed to collective action as a means of raising their standard of living, and perhaps moving in a more individualistic direction where expenditure, use of leisure time and social aspiration are concerned. Such a process of convergence is undoubtedly still incipient. But it does suggest that what we may be witnessing is not a working class increasingly adapting to those of a relatively static and homogeneous middle class, but rather the formation of a large new potential social stratum which is neither middle class nor working class.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, op. cit, on "The Confusion between Ends and Means", pp. 100-103.

<sup>2</sup>"The Unproletarian Society", *The Economist*, May 16, 1959.

<sup>3</sup>J. H. Goldthorpe & D. Lockwood, "Not so Bourgeois after all" *New Society*, October 1962, no 3, p. 19. Goldthorpe *et al* continued their investigation of the class structure throughout the sixties and published the following books on the subject: J. Goldthorpe *et al*, *The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1968; J. Goldthorpe *et al*, *The Affluent Worker: Industrial*



This new social stratum is what Nicos Poulantzas would call "the new petty bourgeoisie"<sup>1</sup> some years later.

The implication of all these analyses is the call for a re-thinking of socialism and socialist strategies adequate for the 1960s. Hugh Gaitskell<sup>2</sup> the leader of the Labour Party in the aftermath of the October 1959 electoral defeat stated that:

We will have to do some re-thinking - not of our principles but of their application to the present day.<sup>3</sup>

And as the *Tribune* put it in an article entitled "The Vote for the Casino Society":

It is not enough simply to say that we must preach Socialism as we did in the good old days. Every new generation has its own political vocabulary. Labour must present itself to the voters - as clearly it now does not - as a modern party that can equip Britain to meet the demands and opportunities of the second half of this century.<sup>4</sup>

and:

We need real new thinking not the patching and tinkering of the last five years.<sup>5</sup>

Or more ironically as the same paper stated it -from another standpoint- in *Tribune's* "Political Dictionary 1960":

RE-THINK: a highly respectable process of cogitation, expurgation or regurgitation. Not to be confused with THINK.<sup>6</sup>

*Attitudes and Behaviour*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968; J. Goldthorpe *et al*, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1969.

<sup>1</sup>See Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, New Left Books, London, 1975; Nicos Poulantzas, "The New Petty Bourgeoisie", in Alan Hunt (ed) *Class and Class Structure*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1977.

<sup>2</sup>For the revisionism of Gaitskell and his followers, see Stephen Haseler, *The Gaitskellites: Revisionism in the British Labour Party, 1951-1964*, Macmillan, London, 1969.

<sup>3</sup>See *Labour Party Annual Conference Report*, Bournemouth, November 1959.

<sup>4</sup>"The Vote for the Casino Society", *The Tribune*, London, October 16, 1959, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>*The Tribune*, London, October 23, 1959.

Practically, the appeal for rethinking meant on the old-revisionist side the re-writing of Clause IV (4) of the Labour Party's Constitution, an attack on what they called the sectarianism of the Trade Unions and Constituency Labour Parties, dropping of the nationalisation policy and recognition of capitalism's ability to solve most of the problems that made a socialist transformation of society a necessity. As Douglas Jay declared:

The slogans of 1926 and 1931 do not mean a great deal to the people voting today...The 1945 Government had transformed society and made it less class ridden. Now the party must not be surprised if a transformed society needed a transformed appeal. The Labour Party must represent all people in every section of the society who wanted real social advance: nothing less than a better and fairer distribution to the wealth of the community.<sup>1</sup>

The response to these revisionist ideas came from the Left inside and outside the Labour Party's "space". The *Tribune* Group of Labour MPs was a pole of opposition to the leadership's attack on the principles of labourist socialism in its Morrisonian corporate form. Numerous articles appeared in its pages defending public ownership and pointing out the deficiencies of capitalism. In the Manifesto entitled *A Victory for Socialism* published in the *Tribune* on the 13th of November 1959 they put forward their aims: peace, social ownership, socialist values (higher moral values, better material standards), a radical crusade against injustice, waste and intolerance, against proposal for creating a division between the industrial and political wings of the party and for weakening the influence of the Constituency Labour Parties.<sup>2</sup>

*Nationalisation* was one of the main issues in the 1960s and a matter of dispute between the Left-wingers and the Right-wingers of the Labour Party. It is true that the Labour Party had no clear policy on the subject. Nationalisation policies were linked with Clause IV (4), the demand of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange in the Party's Constitution. According to the Party's Constitution, Clause IV (4) was designed :

To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Douglas Jay, quoted in the *Tribune*, London, December 4, 1959, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>See *A Victory for Socialism* in *The Tribune*, November 13, 1959, pp. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup>The Constitution of the Labour Party, Clause IV.-Party Objects, par. 4.

*Public ownership* and *nationalisation* were viewed by the revisionists as *means* to achieve a better management of capitalism and not as vehicles for transferring power from the capitalist class to the working class. The "old revisionists" called for the dropping of commitments to public ownership for the purpose of gaining higher electoral benefits.

Public ownership is not a principle, but a *means* of advancing principles.<sup>1</sup>

Thus nationalisation was meant "to serve the nation" and not to act upon a socialist project of transforming society.

Clause IV (4) was an - at least verbal - obstacle to revisionist reconstruction, so its removal would suit them best in terms of their new appeal to the voters, because their main preoccupation was how to gain office, and not how to shape a socialist consciousness to the masses. On the other hand, the trade unions were opposed to the proposal to drop the commitment to public ownership and nationalisation, although not necessarily from a socialist standpoint, more from a syndicalist one.<sup>2</sup>

The nationalisation debate was a core issue for the reasons mentioned and it also had implications for economic planning. Defenders of nationalisation linked it with the "free hand" it could give to the government to plan its economic strategy and social programme. Opponents argued that because capitalism had changed its nature, managers -whom they equated with capitalists presumably- were willing to cooperate with the government of the day in return for a fair profit. Besides, central planning -they argued- led to totalitarian solutions -look at the USSR's five year plans- and not necessarily to efficiency. These arguments concerned with the defence of a mixed economy, which in order to operate efficiently needed a state owned sector which collaborated harmoniously with the private one helping it to overcome financial and other organic difficulties.

The "old revisionists" heyday was coming to its end by the early 1960s, but the belief in an sustainable societal consensus and the narrowing of the gap between labour and capital found accommodation alongside with the belief in progress, in the

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<sup>1</sup>*Socialist Commentary*, "More or Less Socialism?", editorial, November 1959, p. 3, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>See S. Haseler, *The Gaitskellites, Revisionism in the British Labour Party 1951-64*, Macmillan, London, 1969, ch.8: The Clause IV Debate; T. Cliff and D. Gluckstein, *The Labour Party, A Marxist History*, Bookmarks, London, 1988, esp. ch. 12.

policies of *technocratic collectivism*<sup>1</sup> in the 1964 election Manifesto *Let's Go With Labour For A New Britain*, where the belief in social harmony as an eternal characteristic of British society was once again manifested. Harold Wilson, Tony Benn, Peter Shore and the personnel of the Labour Research Department identified with this new era. According to Wilson's speech after his election to the leadership:<sup>2</sup>

We are re-defining and we are re-stating our Socialism in terms of *the scientific revolution*. But that revolution cannot become a reality unless we are prepared to make far-reaching changes in economic and social attitudes which permeate our whole system of society. That Britain which is to be forged in *the white heat* of this revolution will be no place for restrictive practices or outdated methods on either side of industry.<sup>3</sup>

Socialism was redefined in terms of efficient planning and administration.

We must shape our policies at home and abroad as part of an *administrative unity*. This is what Socialism means, a unity of direction for all the decisions a government has to take.<sup>4</sup>

"The white heat of technology" seemed to fire up new ideas of a scientific and technological revolution as a pre-condition for the modernization of the British economy. The idea that the technological revolution would set free British capital was expressed first in the document *Signposts for the Sixties* which was adopted by the 1961 Annual Labour Party Conference, elaborated in *Labour and the Scientific Revolution* (1963) and formed the basis of Labour's electoral programme *Let's Go With Labour For A New Britain* in 1964.

Harold Wilson's view of socialism was one of managing a modernised capitalism in the era of technological revolution. Although he was seen as a left-winger mainly because of his opposition to Gaitskell's effort to delete Clause IV from the party's

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<sup>1</sup>For the ideology and the policies of "technocratic-collectivism" see Alan Warde, *Consensus and Beyond: The development of Labour Party strategy since the Second World War*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1982.

<sup>2</sup>After the death of Gaitskell, Wilson was elected leader of the Labour Party in October 1963.

<sup>3</sup>*Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1963*, The Labour Party, London, p. 140, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup>*Let's Go with Labour for a New Britain*, Labour Party Election Manifesto, 1964, p. 14, emphasis added; see also Harold Wilson, *The New Britain: Labour's Plan*, Penguin Books, London, 1964; Harold Wilson, *Purpose in Politics, Selected Speeches*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1964.



constitution his grounds of doing so were more pragmatic, if not cynical. As Wilson put it:

We were being asked to take Genesis out of the Bible. You don't have to be a fundamentalist to say that Genesis is a part of the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

In reality Wilson's image was one of "modernisation" of Britain, of collaboration with the EEC, of tripartism (Trade Unions, Government and CBI "constructive" co-operation), in a word: *corporatism*,<sup>2</sup> the integration of the working class into the system.

But there was a long march before tripartism or liberal corporatism, as it is also known in political theory, came into the fore. The experiences in the years between 1964 to 1973 under the Wilson leadership and a Labour administration from 1964 to 1970 paved the way to a more open class-neutral ideology and policy. Perhaps the best indicator of Labour's thinking during these years can be found in its handling of the economy and especially in its re-defined relationship with the trade union movement.

The 1969 White Paper, *In Place of Strife*<sup>3</sup>, was an early indication of what was to follow. *In Place of Strife* set out to provide what Barbara Castle saw as "a coherent philosophy of the relations between management, employers and the Government."<sup>4</sup> The proposed legislation gave full expression to the revisionist ideological theme that one of the main functions of a Labour government is to impose harmony in the national interest over the industrial/political manifestation of class conflict. However, the Labour government by proposing a permanent statutory and penal element in collective bargaining, it was raising the question of whether the labour movement with

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Colin Leys, *Politics in Britain: From Labourism to Thatcherism*, Verso, London, 1989, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>For the concept of "corporatism", see Bob Jessop, "Corporatism, Parliamentarism and Social Democracy" in P. Schmitter and G. Lehmbruch (eds) *Corporatism in Liberal Democracy*, Sage Publications, London, 1979; Peter Williamson, *Corporatism in Perspective: An Introductory Guide to Corporatist Theory*, Sage Publications, London, 1989.

<sup>3</sup>*In Place of Strife* (White Paper, Cmnd 3888, London, HMSO, 1969) and its defeat was a primary example of anti-union legislation and the labour movement's strength at that point. The proposals (held down wages, raised taxes, impose legal curbs on union power by Wilson and Barbara Castle) were strongly opposed by the trade unions and by a considerable section of the Cabinet, and had to be withdrawn after the Whips had warned Wilson that the measure would split the party and might not pass the House of Commons.

<sup>4</sup>Barbara Castle, 779 HC Deb. 3 March 1969, col. 42, quoted in Leo Panitch, *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy: the Labour Party, the Trade Unions and Incomes Policy, 1945-1974*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976, p. 171.

its commitment to voluntarism could any longer regard a Labour administration as embracing the interest of the working class in its re-definition of the national interest. The Labour government's proposed legislation in the *In Place of Strife* document was eventually defeated due to the strong negotiating position of the trade union movement at the time, but the question of the relationship between the labour movement and the Labour Party remained partly unanswered.

The years between 1970-1974, saw the irreconcilable continuation of the conflict between the labour movement and the Conservative government and set the immediate context for the development in the Labour Party that led to the latter's new strategy, namely corporatism. The radicalization at the base of the Labour Party in the years 1964-1974 manifested in the developments in the trade unions movement, visible in the outbreak of the highest levels of industrial militancy since the 1920s. The key to the question of the future direction of British social democracy, however, continued to lie in its attitude to industrial militancy. The 1969 experience of *In Place of Strife* confrontational anti-trade union legislation when the Labour government attempted to restrict severely the legality of what was branded as "unconstitutional strikes" and to undermine thereby the key base of union militancy and its subsequent defeat made the Labour Party realise that policies of co-operation with the trade union movement might have a better chance to work *vis-à-vis* their coercive counterparts. Although Harold Wilson's own attitude to the class conflict engendered by the opposition to the 1971 Conservative Industrial Relations Act, when he complained of inadvertent fostering of revolutionary tendencies in the working class:

the growth of shop floor power, industrial militancy, part of it spontaneous and part of it capable of being created by unscrupulous unofficial leaders...is the central fact of the 1970s...Faced with this new and dangerous development...the court of the right hon. Gentlemen opposite shows as much understanding in the revolutionary situation as the court of Louis XVI or Nicholas II or King Farouk.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a "classless" society reappeared in the Labour Party's rhetoric with a difference, this time the old-revisionist Croslandite status-free society was to be replaced by the Wilsonite corporate-interest ridden one, though both versions still remained within the revisionist ideology with its belief in the neutrality of the state.

Although the leadership between the years 1964 to 1973 was moving steadily to the right the base of the party was moving equally steadily to the left. The unpopular

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<sup>1</sup>Cited in Leo Panitch, *Working Class Politics in Crisis*, Verso, London, 1986, p. 102 quoted from 808 *House of Commons Debates*, 15 December 1970, cc. 1233-5.

Conservative policies *vis-à-vis* the unions were used by the Labour left-wingers as a vehicle for radical change. As Tony Benn put it to the 1973 Labour Party Annual Conference:

the crisis we inherit when we come to power will be the occasion for fundamental change and not the excuse for postponing it.<sup>1</sup>

A promise that was ill kept by the Labour government during the corporatist experiment.

The primary example of tripartism was the drawing up of a *Social Contract* between the three partners: the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, the Trade Unions Congress and the Confederation of British Industry.

The nature of the *Social Contract* was specified in February 1973, in the document *Economic Policy and the Cost of Living*, produced by the Labour Party-TUC Liaison Committee. This Liaison Committee between the trade unions, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party was established in January 1972 when the Labour Party was still in opposition. The document argued that the problem of inflation could be properly considered only within the context of a coherent economic and social strategy -one designed to overcome the nation's grave economic problems and to provide the basis for co-operation between the trade unions and the Government.<sup>2</sup> This in plain words meant: price controls, repeal of the Housing Finance Act, public ownership of all land required for house building, a large scale distribution of income and wealth, the channeling of resources into the social services with the objective of faster growth.<sup>3</sup>

The "social contract" was an attempt by the Labour Party to gain the voluntary support of the trade unions in implementing its incomes policy in favour of the nation as a whole and not particularly in favour of the working class. The lessons of the past, especially the trade unions opposition to anti-union legislation like the 1969 white paper *In Place of Strife*, where the state had chosen policies of confrontation were well learned. What was needed now was not confrontation but cooperation between the state, capital and labour on the basis of which the state could look for the labour movement's cooperation with its policies. The pledges of the Social Contract

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Leo. Panitch, "Socialists and the Labour Party: A Reappraisal", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1979, p. 61 and also in his *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy*, op. cit., p. 229.

<sup>2</sup>See *Economic Policy and the Cost of Living*, Labour Party-TUC Liaison Committee, February, 1973, pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup>See *Economic Policy and the Cost of Living*, op. cit., p. 60.

were put into practice after the 1974 Labour electoral victory, first by the repeal of the Conservative government's unpopular 1971 Industrial Relations Act through the restoration of a Trade Unions and Industrial Relations Act which also extended the principle of the closed shop, and an Employment Protection Act, which was meant to improve job security by tightening up on unfair dismissal and providing compensation paid by the employer for many categories of redundant workers. The issue of "industrial democracy" was taken up and a commission was set up (the Bullock Commission) to make recommendations. The so-called "social wage" (collectively consumed services and social security benefits) was to be increased. The 1972 Housing Finance Act which had raised council-house rents was repealed and a National Enterprise Board was established to invest public funds in companies in profitable sectors.<sup>1</sup>

The *Social Contract* signified a change in Labour's conception of politics by abandoning the assumption that there was a natural identity of interests in the nation as a whole. Though it continued to use the rhetoric of nation it embodied a strong view of the role of corporate interests. Government was not to be the *mediator* between different interests, rather it should become one institution involved in the *direct* negotiation between interests. The lesson learned from the period 1964-1970 was that the representatives of capital and labour have to be placated and that the trade union movement have to be persuaded, rather than coerced, to accept governmental economic policy.

The *Social Contract* also marked a shift in the Labour Party's ideology from social justice to co-operation, from old-revisionism to managerialism and a more open class-neutral ideology. Class politics were buried and a *volonté générale* replaced the particular wills. As Wilson put it:

In February [1973] the country rejected, as we had urged, policies of confrontation and conflict and "fighting to a finish" philosophies. We put before the country the policy of the Social Contract.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Colin Leys, *Politics in Britain: From Labourism to Thatcherism*, Verso, London, 1989; Alan Warde, *Consensus and Beyond: The Development of Labour Party Strategy since the Second World War*, op. cit.; Dennis Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics, The End of Consensus?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Alan Warde, *Consensus and Beyond: The Development of Labour Party Strategy since the Second World War*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1982, p. 147.

Technocratic collectivism temporarily offered a working formula for compromise between different social interests. The link was economic success. But the belief in modernization did not last long. The recession of the 1970s put an end to all that.

British social democracy's profile was different from the rest of the European models. Its uniqueness was demonstrated in the fact of the strong structural position of the trade union movement, shop stewards and rank and file activists. The devaluation of sterling (three times in the 1970s) weakened the position of the Labour Party on the one hand as a successful manager of British capitalism and on the other as the representative of labourist demands.

A critique of "Wilsonism" came from the Left inside the Labour Party -which by no means must be taken as a homogeneous group of thought- in the form of a neo-Keynesian *Alternative Economic Strategy* which first surfaced in the most left-wing Labour Party Manifesto after 1945, the 1973 *Labour's Programme for Britain*, was designed to bring a more socialist solution to the problem of Britain's relative economic decline. The *Alternative Economic Strategy*'s primary concern was the provision of funds for investment through the National Enterprise Board, extension of public ownership, planning agreements, industrial democracy, price controls and economic growth. It was most of all a *national* strategy for economic recovery not necessarily a socialist one although it came from the Left in the Labour Party and was against 'Croslandite' revisionism. The origins of the *Alternative Economic Strategy* lay in the Left's critique of Wilson's attempt to implement "Technocratic-Collectivism", and in particular of the apparent preparedness of Labour governments to resolve the problems of capital accumulation at the expense of the labour movement. The primary objective of the *Alternative Economic Strategy* was to revive economic growth through asserting effective control over the national economy. The main advocate of the strategy within the Labour Party was the *Tribune Group* of Labour MPs. The *Tribunites* argued that the economic problems facing the country merely demonstrated the limitations of traditional Keynesianism and that more comprehensive controls were required to counteract the long-term structural weakness of British manufacturing industry.

The *Alternative Economic Strategy* was one of the last major interventions in the 1970s by the Labour Party Left, who had gained considerable influence in the years between 1968 and 1975, owing mainly to the failure of both social reformism in the form of welfarism and the modernization strategy of the Wilson years.<sup>1</sup> It was also a

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<sup>1</sup>See Stuart Holland, *The Socialist Challenge*, Quartet Books, London, 1975.



strategy supported by sections of the extra-parliamentary left movement<sup>1</sup> and even from individual members of the Communist Party.<sup>2</sup>

1976 is another landmark in the Labour Party's history in relation to its belief in the neutrality of the state which goes hand in hand with the belief in the power of individual governments to control unilaterally i.e. without external interference either from extra-parliamentary forces or from international factors, the pace of events. The 1976 International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescue package for the pound marked the death of Keynesianism, that is the belief in a mixed economy and the role of government as a stimulator of growth. The Labour government arranged massive loans from the IMF in return for cuts in public spending, controls on the money supply, and a reduction in the public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR). Inflation was reduced to 8.2 per cent at the end of 1978 and the pound recovered, but Labour's plans for social reforms had to be postponed. The IMF arrangements were yet another reminder of the weakness of the British economy and of the limited powers of parliamentary governments. As Callaghan told the 1976 Labour Party conference just after he took over from Wilson as Prime Minister:

We used to think that you could spend your way out of a recession, and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists, and that in so far as it ever did exist, it only worked on each occasion since the war by injecting a bigger dose of inflation into the economy, followed by a higher level of unemployment as the next step.<sup>3</sup>

The so-called "Winter of Discontent" 1978-1979, where the highest levels of industrial militancy since the 1926 General Strike were recorded, should not be taken as a surprise. The unions were asked once again to carry the full weight of the recession. The last blow came in 1978 when the Trade Unions Council refused Callaghan's request for a fourth year of wage restraint. Callaghan instead of calling an election, called for a new wage ceiling of 5 per cent, a call which was rejected by the Labour Party Conference

On the other hand the growing gap between the policies of the Labour government and the party outside grew more apparent in the 1970s. The Labour Party Conference and the National Executive Committee regularly advocated policies of greater state

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<sup>1</sup>Cf., CSE Group and Labour Coordinating Committee: "The Alternative Economic Strategy: A Response to the Economic Crisis", London, 1980.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., Sam Aaronovitch, *The Road from Thatcherism, The Alternative Economic Strategy*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1981.

<sup>3</sup>*Labour Party Annual Conference Report*, Blackpool September 27 - October 1 1976, The Labour Party, London, 1976, p. 188.

ownership and higher public expenditure, all contrary to the government's economic policies. The contents of the National Executive Committee's *Labour Programme 1976*, were compiled from Conference resolutions and were an official statement of the party's medium term strategy. Proposals for the nationalization of banks and insurance companies, compulsory planning agreements, and a broader range of welfare measures were endorsed by Conference. All these policies were far to the left in comparison to those in the 1950s and 1960s. The 1976 *Labour Programme* contained no commitment to the mixed economy, -one of the cornerstones of the post-war Keynesian settlement- was anti-EEC, anti-NATO and in favour of unilateral disarmament.

To sum up, Labourism in praxis meant a regulatory state, non-state intervention in trade union affairs and a policy of fairer (re)distribution of wealth. Keynesianism and the Welfare State were its Procrustean test-bed. Events in the 1980s took a different turn with the leadership -especially after the 1983 electoral defeat- moving steadily to the right.

## II. 2. THE CASE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN: 1956-1978

### II. 2.(i) Introduction

The Communist Party of Great Britain's theoretical position in its early years was based on Marxism. The party's ties with the newly born revolutionary state in Russia were tight enough. Lenin<sup>1</sup> himself more than once drastically interfered with the affairs of the British Communists, especially over the issue of affiliation to the Labour Party which he recommended for tactical purposes. The idea was that by working through the ranks of a party based on a mass working class base (the trade unions) and by using it as a platform for advancing socialist ideas it would be possible to transform it into a real vehicle for socialist advance in Britain.

The Sixth Annual Conference, (8-9th April 1917), of the British Socialist Party (the forerunner of the Communist Party) took the decision to affiliate to the Labour Party. A referendum was held and the decision was confirmed in 1919.<sup>2</sup> Affiliation was feasible only because the peculiar structure of the Labour Party based on the trade unions made it possible for affiliated bodies to make their own criticism of the

<sup>1</sup>See Vladimir I. Lenin, *Lenin On Britain*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979.

<sup>2</sup>See Report of the Executive Committee to the Eighth Annual Conference of the British Socialist Party, July 1919.

leadership and organisation and also to carry on with their own policies. As Lenin put it in the Second Congress of the International:

Comrades Tanner and Ramsay tell us that the majority of British Communists will not accept affiliation. But must we always agree with the majority? Not at all. If they have not yet understood which are correct tactics, then perhaps it would be better to wait. Even the parallel existence for a time of two parties would be better than refusing to reply to the question as to which tactics are correct...We must study in a special commission the question raised by the British delegation and then we shall say *affiliation to the Labour Party is the correct tactic*. If the majority is against it, we must organise a separate minority...If the British Communists do not reach agreement, and if a mass party is not formed, a split is inevitable one way or another.<sup>1</sup>

For Lenin a policy of entristm was a matter of tactic, first for the British Socialist Party to secure a mass stepping stone to the working class and second for the British Socialist Party to be able to expose the revisionist elements in the Labour Party's theory and praxis.

The affiliation issue reappeared in the Draft Programme for the 16th Conference in 1939 (but was never discussed due to the Second World War) and after the War in all the editions of the Communist Party's Programme, *The British Road to Socialism*.

The argument of those against affiliation was that the Labour Party was dominated by the affiliated trade unions and not by the ideology of Marxism, as in the case of the Communist Party, and also that the Labour Party's earliest period giving independence to the affiliated members was more or less over.<sup>2</sup> The Labour Party was never in favour of communist ideas. The National Executive of the Labour Party at the June 1922 Conference at Edinburgh advised against acceptance of the Communist Party as an affiliated society. Ramsay MacDonald insisted that the Communist Party's primary aim was to fight the Labour Party, especially since the Communist Party's insistence on the right to criticise and to press for policy changes. The Conference agreed, by

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<sup>1</sup>Vladimir I. Lenin, *Lenin On Britain*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, pp. 450-451, emphasis added.

Lenin in the Issue No 5, of the Bulletin of the Second Congress of the Communist International, August 5, 1920, gave the concluding sentences of this speech as follows:

"We must express our opinion frankly, whatever it may be. If the British Communists do not reach agreement on the question of the organisation of the mass movement, and if a split takes place on this issue, then better a split than rejection of the organisation of the mass movement. It is better to rise to definite and sufficiently clear tactics and ideology than to go on remaining in the previous chaos" (*Lenin On Britain*, op. cit., p. 451, editors note).

<sup>2</sup>See MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party...*, op. cit.

342 votes to 161, to a new rule which required all delegates from constituent bodies to local Labour Parties or to any Labour Party Conference:

(a) individually to accept the Constitution and principles of the Labour Party and (b) not to be a member of any organisation having as one of its objects the return of candidates to Parliament or local authorities, unless endorsed or approved by the Labour Party.<sup>1</sup>

After that decision the Communist Party was implicitly excluded from affiliation. In reality, only the Social Democratic Federation -for a year- and the British Socialist Party -from 1916-20- were affiliated to the Labour Party. Affiliation was no longer possible after the 1946 change of the Labour Party's Rules which made such a discussion an empty talk.

(3) Political organisations not affiliated to or associated under a National Agreement with the Party on 1 January 1946, having their own Programme, Principles and Policy for distinctive and separate propaganda, or possessing Branches in the Constituencies or engaged in the promotion of Parliamentary or Local Government Candidatures, or owing allegiance to any political organisation, situated abroad, shall be ineligible for affiliation to the Party.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless the Communist Party was always eager to seek either affiliation or a special relationship with the Labour Party.

As for the social forces behind the Communist Party of Great Britain, they were to be found in the strong shop stewards movement in the factories and among the unemployed. The Communist Party's ideology was Marxism and its policies were those of the Third International (Comintern, 1919-1943). Loyalty to the Soviet Union's policies was almost uncritical. In line with Moscow in the period 1928-1932 the Communist Party of Great Britain came to see the rise and consolidation of Fascism and Nazism as another normal form of the capitalist state and not as an exceptional case which, because it was exceptional, necessitated exceptional measures by the working class and its allies; this analysis made them unable to distinguish between social democratic and bourgeois politics on the one hand and bourgeois and fascist politics on the other, and consequently to equate the social democrats with the fascists. The worst enemy of socialism for the Comintern was still social democracy, not fascism. This belief of the Communist International was well expressed by the

<sup>1</sup>*Labour Party Annual Conference Report, 1922*, pp. 196-199 and 177, reference in L. J. MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party, its origin and development until 1929*, MacGibbon and Kee, London, 1966, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>*The Constitution of the Labour Party*, Clause II.- Membership, par. 3.

leader of the German Communist Party (KPD), Ernst Thälmann, at the eve of the rise of Hitler in power and a few months before himself and thousands of other social democrats and communists marched to the concentration camps. Thälmann stigmatized in *Die Internationale* (Dezember 1931), -the German edition of the organ of the Comintern- "all those who lost the social democratic forest for the national-socialist trees".<sup>1</sup> The Communist Party of Great Britain's attitude towards the Trade Unions Council (TUC) and the Labour Party was the denunciation of both of them as "social fascists".<sup>2</sup> This policy had a negative impact on their broader influence as a Party. Finally, in the period 1932-1934, the Communist Party moved towards the advocacy of the policies of the United Front of all working class parties and unions against the threat of Fascism. In March 1933 it formally proposed to the Labour Party and to the Independent Labour Party that a United Front should be formed. The Labour Party refused to cooperate with the Communists.

After the War the Communist Party managed to secure only two seats in Parliament but its influence in the unions was comparatively high. The Marshall Plan, or the European Recovery Programme as it was also known, was rejected by the Communist Party but welcomed by the Labour Party. The Communist Party of Great Britain accepted the lead of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) which was set up to co-ordinate the policies of international communism. Things started to change after the Soviet invasion in Hungary in 1956 and the denunciation of Stalin by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956.<sup>3</sup> The Communist Party of Great Britain's Programme *The British Road to Socialism* in its January 1951 first edition claimed that :

Its policy and programme is based on the impregnable foundation of Marxist theory, the science embodying the experiences of the

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<sup>1</sup>The reference is taken from D. Desanti, *L' Internationale*, p. 175, quoted in Spiros Linardatos' article: "The Leninists are Naked" in the newspaper *To Vima*, p. 6, 9 September, 1990, Athens.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the line of "social fascism" and of the fascist phenomenon, see Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship, The Third International and the Problem of Fascism*, New Left Books, London, 1979 and also, Nicos Poulantzas, Ralph Miliband and Jean Pierre Faye, *Problems of the Modern State and the Fascist Phenomenon*, Themelio, Athens, 1981.

<sup>3</sup>On the Khrushchev speech and the impact of 1956 on the Communist Party of Great Britain, see especially the 1976 issue of *The Socialist Register*: (Part I: 1956 and After), edited by Ralph Miliband and John Saville, Merlin Press, London, 1976; on the "cult of the individual", see *The Cult of the Individual, The Controversy within British Communism: 1956-1958*, British and Irish Communist Organisation, Belfast, 1975.



international working class, as developed by *Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin...*<sup>1</sup>

The same was true for the 1952 edition of *The British Road to Socialism* but no longer for the February 1958 one where Engels and Stalin were expelled from the Party!

...the British working class needs the Communist Party, as an organised party of Socialists. With its class outlook and policies based on the scientific theory of socialism developed by *Marx and Lenin*, which embodies the experience of the working class of all countries...<sup>2</sup>

The Communist Party of Great Britain's socialism was more Britain-oriented especially after the Second World War with the advocacy of a "national road to socialism". The catchword was: "*Polycentrism*" - the idea that international communism should no longer have a single centre, but that each party should cultivate a national road.<sup>3</sup> National roads' policy had its origins in the Popular Front strategy of the 1930s ("unite with the progressive bourgeoisie against fascism"), and in the British case the idea of a national road to socialism first surfaced in the Communist Party's programme *The British Road to Socialism*, 1951, which made it clear enough with the rejection of the earlier conception of a soviet type of régime, the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the overthrow of the capitalist state by revolutionary means. Instead they were advocating a peaceful road to socialism, which would safeguard all the democratic values of the British social tradition and fight against all anachronisms like the Monarchy and the House of Lords. The House of Commons would have to remain intact and political pluralism was guaranteed. Planning, co-operatives and the socialisation of the means of production were their means of achieving socialism.

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<sup>1</sup>*The British Road to Socialism*, Programme adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist Party, The Communist Party, January 1951, p. 22, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>*The British Road to Socialism*, New text prepared by the Executive Committee as instructed by the 25th Party Progress, The Communist Party, September 1957, p. 29, emphasis added (the Programme was published in February 1958 - F. D.).

<sup>3</sup>For the meaning of "Polycentrism" and the "national road" strategy, see: Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere: A cura di Ernesto Raginieri*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1967; Donald Sassoon, *The Strategy of the Italian Communist Party*, Frances Pinter, London 1981, esp. pp. 98-119 and p. 108 where there are references to Togliatti's Interview to *Nuovi Argomenti*, no 20, May-June 1956; Ernest Mandel, *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, The Bitter Fruits of 'Socialism in One Country'*, (first published as *Critique de l' Eurocommunisme*, François Maspero, Paris, 1978), New Left Books, London, 1978; George Schwab (ed), *Eurocommunism: The Ideological and Political Theoretical Foundations*, European Studies, no 7, Aldwych Press, London, 1981.

The Communist Party belief both in the leading role of the working class in the Broad Anti-Monopoly or Democratic Alliance and especially in the vanguard role of the Party was apparent from its foundation to the late 1960s. Things started to change in the 1970s when the Party moved towards Eurocommunism, as we shall discuss below.

## II. 2. (ii) THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND *THE BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM* 1968

1956 rather than 1959 was the most significant year in the history of the Communist Party of Great Britain. In the 1960s and 1970s the party followed the tide of history towards a further denunciation of its Stalinist past and a more open Europeanist approach.

The shift to the "*polycentrist*" approach -that is the idea that the Communist movement should not have a single centre of reference, i. e. Moscow, but rather many different ones, or what Palmiro Togliatti called: "Unity in Diversity" - first became official policy in the party programme the *British Road to Socialism*, 1951,<sup>1</sup> but the 1968 edition of *The British Road to Socialism* can serve best as the starting point in discussing the ideas of the Communist Party in the 1960s after the experience of 'technocratic collectivism', as the latter was expressed by the Wilson administration. The 1968 edition published in October of that year, was the fourth edition of *The British Road to Socialism*, it was first edited in 1951 and revised in 1952 and 1958.

The *1968 Programme* was published during the second term of a Labour administration and in the middle of an accelerated economic crisis, on the one hand, and after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the students' and workers' revolt in France, in May 1968, on the other. The latter events did not seem to have any visible effect on the *1968 Programme* although both the Executive Committee and the Political Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain were against the invasion of Czechoslovakia:

The Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain deeply deplores the military intervention in Czechoslovakia on Tuesday, August 20th, by troops of the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and the German Democratic Republic.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See *The British Road to Socialism*, The Communist Party of Great Britain, London, January 1951.

<sup>2</sup>Statement of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain, August 24th, 1968, *Marxism Today*, October 1968, p. 294; on the Czechoslovak situation, see also: Joint Statement of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the

The *1968 Programme* also served as a critique of the Labour Government's record. *Britishness* was once again one of the characteristics of *The British Road to Socialism, 1968*. Monopoly capitalism was condemned because of the harm it caused to British interests. Growth and efficiency were demanded from British business and protective measures asked to be taken by the government against the penetration of foreign capital.

While small British firms are swallowed up by larger ones, some of these in turn are swallowed by American combines with complex international ties. *Some major industries cease to be solely in British hands.*<sup>1</sup>

The language they used was still within the "orthodox" Marxist tradition but modified:

The Communist Party is a Marxist party. It has stood consistently for scientific socialism, and has always formulated its policies in this light. As Marxists we understand that the interests of the capitalist class and the working class are opposed and cannot be reconciled; that capitalism can and must be ended and replaced; that the working people, led by the working class, must win state power and build a socialist society.<sup>2</sup>

But the Communist Party did not seem eager to play the leading role; as they claimed:

First, that socialism can only be won by the combined action of the working people led by their socialist and democratic organisations. The Communist Party has a vital part to play, but *it does not seek an exclusive position of leadership.*<sup>3</sup>

The first traces of "Europeanisation" became visible in the shape of an "all European form of co-operation":

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Soviet Union, August 1, 1968; The Bratislava Statement, August 3, 1968; Statement on Czechoslovakia of the Political Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain, July 26, 1968; Second Statement of the Political Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain, August 8, 1968, *Marxism Today*, September 1968.

<sup>1</sup>*The British Road to Socialism, 1968*, op. cit. p. 9, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6, emphasis added.

Britain's needs would be better served by an all-European form of co-operation or trading pattern coupled with a systematic expansion of world trade.<sup>1</sup>

They criticised the EEC:

New economic policies are needed to replace those designed to close the ranks of capitalist Europe in opposition to socialism. Such is the Common Market (European Economic Community), a combination of the biggest trusts of capitalist Europe, a lure to British monopolists determined to increase their profits and improve their position in the world. The aim of this combination is economic and political domination of European resources, and of developing countries still dependent on European states. It represents not only a threat to democracy in Western Europe, but a hardening and strengthening of forces bitterly opposed to the working class everywhere, to the U.S.S.R. and other socialist countries and to the national liberation movements.<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons they were asking for Britain's *non-entry* to the E.E.C.

The *British Road to Socialism, 1968* provides us with an analysis of the role of the trade unions within capitalism and in the advance to socialism. The labour movement was defined as a synthesis of the trade unions, co-operatives, the Communist Party and the left-wingers of the Labour Party. This was one of the last official Communist Party's documents to pay tribute to *industrial militancy* and consider it as *a decisive element in the everyday struggle against capitalism*.

Nothing has weakened or split the Labour Party more effectively than the attack mounted against militants, the constant moves to isolate and neutralise the left. Nothing could so much strengthen and inspire it as a decisive rejection of the idea that the task of the labour movement is confined to winning reforms within the confines of capitalism or helping capitalism to work better.<sup>3</sup>

And:

Above all it is essential that the labour movement should clearly understand the relation between its immediate objectives and the longer term aim of socialism. *Without the struggles in the work place, without the struggles now on wages and hours and rents, on peace and liberty there will be no advance to socialism*. Conversely without clear socialist aims the immediate struggles will lose their strength and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

significance...The experience of struggle will help towards clarity of ideas, just as clarity of perspective helps the immediate struggle.<sup>1</sup>

The issue is further explained in the *1968 Programme's* attitude towards "Industrial Democracy and Control". A "socialist" corporatist strategy was adopted as an alternative British way to the long abandoned idea of a Soviet Britain.

The right of the workers to be involved in policy-making and control in industry is essential for economic advance and to safeguard the interests of the working people...At workshop and plant levels the workers should have rights of consultation and participation in all management decisions...Trade unions, co-operatives, local authorities and other democratic bodies should be drawn into the fight against restrictive trade practices.<sup>2</sup>

As for the duties and rights of trade unions in a Socialist democracy:

Autocratic managerial control as it exists under state monopoly capitalism would be replaced by democratic management. This would involve *worker's participation in management at all levels* - in the planning of industry as a whole - in the individual factories and departments of factories and at workshop level, with the right to inspect the books. The *workers* would play their part in *determining the overall economic plan* through their exercise of their *rights as citizens*.<sup>3</sup>

And the socialist nationalised industries:

Nationalised industries would form the core of a planned economy guided by the socialist government and state. Their boards would be composed of workers, technicians, technologists, scientists and managers with direct experience of the industry.<sup>4</sup>

The *British Road to Socialism 1968* argued that the trade unions would fight together with the Communist Party for rising living standards, demanding full employment, guarantee of work at a decent wage, collective bargaining, and no wage restraint. As the authors of the *1968 Programme* put it:

The unions and the labour movement will need to carry through sustained efforts to raise the level of the lower-paid workers and win a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-27, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-35.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-54, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 57-58.



statutory minimum wage. Equal pay for work of equal value for women workers must be made a legal obligation on employers.<sup>1</sup>

The *British Road to Socialism, 1968* endorsed the demand for "payment for change"; that is the right of the workers to demand that every change in working practices (introduction of new technology, changes in working conditions) be met with an increase in wages. It also endorsed what is known as "mutuality" -the proposition that every change, no matter how minor, was not to be implemented until there had been an exhaustive process of consultation and negotiation and then acceptance:<sup>2</sup>

In order to ensure that all increases in productivity bring increases in wages and salaries, shorter working hours, longer holidays and improved fringe benefits, the unions will have to win negotiating rights over all working conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Nationalisation once again was one of the main issues. The *Programme* criticised the labourist version of nationalisation for merely being a servant of the monopolies and helping to expand state monopoly capitalism in Britain. As the authors of the *1968 Programme* put it:

The great monopolies in industries with heavy capital outlay are forced to maintain a high level of output and profits; and this can only be done with state aid, to rationalise processes on new lines, and in particular, to introduce automation...For all these reasons state intervention in the economy has increased rapidly. It was within the framework of state monopoly capitalism that nationalisation of a limited number of industries -electricity, gas railways, coal-mining and steel- was developed.<sup>4</sup>

But a socialist nationalisation should be able:

...to bring the monopoly concerns in the most important sections of industry and finance into public ownership, and secure a radical expansion of the nationalised sector of the economy...reorganising the industries on democratic lines, with governing boards made up of workers and technicians from the industry concerned.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>See Michael Edwardes, *Back from the Brink*, Pan Books in association with Collins, London, 1984, for an account of the implementation of this policy in British Leyland in the 1970s.

<sup>3</sup>*The British Road to Socialism, 1968*, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-32.

This form of nationalisation:

...would bring about far greater industrial efficiency and social well being, and make possible the proper planning of housing, industry and transport.<sup>1</sup>

Nationalisation as it was perceived in the *British Road to Socialism 1968* would be able to give a free hand not only to the government's role in planning but also to the workers themselves. In the first place it was a question of planning:

The social ownership of all the main industries and national resources makes possible for the first time effective planning...Socialist nationalisation is quite different from nationalisation undertaken within a capitalist state, bureaucratically organised, restricted mainly to the utilities and in the interests of the privately-owned sector. It serves the community as a whole...Nationalised industries would form the core of a planned economy guided by the socialist government and state. Their boards would be composed of workers, technologists, scientists and managers with direct experience of the industry.<sup>2</sup>

This kind of socialist planning would make possible a faster growth:

Higher growth rates would result from planned investment accompanied by the rapid application in all field of new techniques, automation, computing and nuclear power.<sup>3</sup>

What did all these statements imply? Surely, the *British Road to Socialism, 1968* was not looking for a form of direct democracy, or autonomous workers' organisations within the factory. Even if workers participate in industrial Boards, this does not equate them with socialist planning bodies. Corporatism has done exactly the same in the nationalised industries under the Labour Party leadership, and these are precisely the politics that the Communist Party was criticising for failing to meet the demands for socialist change.

In all the discussions about participation one should distinguish between two forms of participation : participation in capitalism and participation in socialism. The latter is related to the struggle against the logic of the system, the former for the better development of the system. A distinction needs to be made between methods that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 57-58.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

assure the leading role of the working class in the management of the system (macro-participation) and those which are at the level of the firm (micro-participation). Macro-participation is closely related to a socialist project; micro-participation can be both a capitalist and a socialist form. In capitalism it is a workers' demand and one of the fields of struggle, in socialism it is a decisive element in decision making. Also there is a difference between direct and indirect forms of participation and subjective and objective possibilities of participation, between formal and real; there is also the problem of the composition of the Boards (percentage of workers, voting system etc.) and, last but not least, the rules and presuppositions of participation. The struggle for workers' participation is one of the most important struggles in challenging capitalist relations of production through raising the demand for consultation not only on what is produced but how and why. The Communist Party's Programme, although it presents the form does not give the content of these decision making bodies. A similar pattern of participation was adopted from a Labourist-corporatist standpoint some years later in the battle to save British Leyland from bankruptcy.

The question of *social class* was not discussed as a separate issue in the document. The *1968 Programme* was about the British people who were exploited by state monopoly capitalism; who were prevented from making their own decisions because of the dominance of monopolies on the one hand and the existence of such political and military capitalist institutions like the EEC and the NATO alliance on the other. Implicitly the working class was defined not only as the industrial proletariat (narrow definition), but also as all these people working by hand or brain (broad definition).<sup>1</sup>

A Broad Popular Alliance -the *1968 British Road to Socialism* claimed- should be built around the leadership of the working class (N.B. *not* under the Communist Party's leadership, another departure from Marxism-Leninism). The elements of this anti-monopoly, pro-democracy alliance embraced:

...all working people. Thus workers in factories, offices, professions, working farmers, producers and consumers, owner-occupiers and tenants, housewives, young people and students, pensioners, workers in the peace movement and those active in defence of democracy - all those whose lives are immediately affected by policies framed to perpetuate and uphold monopoly capitalism can be united in struggle.<sup>2</sup>

And by "struggle" they mean:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

What is needed is the continuous use and development of all the traditional democratic means of struggle, among all sections of the people, understanding that *all aspects of struggle hang together - whether demonstration or strike, Parliamentary or extra-Parliamentary pressure.*<sup>1</sup>

But:

*The core of this alliance will be the working class and its organisations, the main class force in the struggle to change society because of its key position in social production. But it will draw on all whose interests are threatened by monopoly capitalism - the overwhelming majority of the people. Their interests are also the national interest.*<sup>2</sup>

The question of class and alliances brings back the issue of the Communist Party-Labour Party relationship. The Communist Party remained faithful to Lenin's advice to affiliate to the Labour Party. Although Lenin's proposal should be taken in its historical perspective and as a tactical move, the Communist Party turned it to an eternal truth and a question of strategy. The Labour Party's transformation from a labourist party to a vehicle for socialism was to be achieved by the growing influence of an affiliated Communist Party working within its ranks. *The British Road to Socialism, 1968* declared that:

We do not and will not in any way seek to impose Marxist ideas on the members of the Labour Party. Acceptance of the Marxist standpoint can only come through personal conviction, as the fruit of experience, discussion, argument and study. Only when and if the majority of Labour Party members come to accept Marxist ideas will the foundation be laid for a single united Marxist party.<sup>3</sup>

But:

Contrary to the ideas spread by some Labour leaders *it is not the aim of the Communist Party to undermine, weaken or split the Labour Party...*The Communist Party is dedicated to the defeat of the deeply entrenched monopoly forces, to the winning of political power by the working people, and on this basis, the advance to socialism. This is the aim too of many socialists in the labour movement. *The Labour-Communist unity for this end is the key to advance on the road to socialism.*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 29, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-30, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25, emphasis added.

The Labour Party was seen more as a movement than as a party predominantly because of its large trade union basis and its federal nature, which promised a certain breathing space for criticism and arguments. The Communist Party, instead of criticising the reformist ideology and praxis of the Labour Party as a whole, theoretically split it into two major components: the right and the left-wingers. The former was blamed for the Labour Party's reformist policies, the latter had to be won to socialism. As the *1968 British Road to Socialism* put it:

The Labour party has been dominated by reformist ideas, spread by right wing leaders who have controlled it over the years. They reject the need for the working people to win political power to bring about a revolutionary transformation of society. They seek only to maintain the existing capitalist order and administer it more efficiently. The policies of the governments they form do not differ in any fundamental way from those of the Tories and are in no sense socialist...They reject the class structure of society and class struggle, or else proclaim that class divisions are withering away. They argue that the state is neutral, above classes; that there is no need to change it...They say that "managed capitalism" is a step towards socialism; that socialism can be but piecemeal within capitalism; or even that the aim should now be a mixed economy and nothing more. These ideas confuse and disarm people.<sup>1</sup>

Another important issue discussed in the *British Road to Socialism, 1968* is that of *rights*. The rights they seek to implement are both traditional (civic and political) and modern (economic and social) and also national, concerning the four different nations inhabiting the British Isles.

Democratic rights embrace such demands as the freedom of speech, of meeting, the right to organise, demonstrate, lobby, picket, strike and also with the popular control of the mass media.<sup>2</sup> A safeguarding and extension of democratic liberties was promised:

It must be a main concern of the labour and popular movement to use and defend every democratic right won in the past, whilst working for a general extension of democratic liberties.<sup>3</sup>

Political rights referred to the rights of people as members of the body politic. *The British Road to Socialism, 1968* promised the vote at 18 ("Young people should be

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 39.



accorded the vote at 18.")<sup>1</sup> and popular representation based on proportional representation. Abolition of the House of Lords and ending of all restrictions which deter members of the armed forces, the civil service, and the police from full participation in democratic, political and trade union activities were also advocated.<sup>2</sup>

National rights referred to the four nations of Great Britain and a form of devolution was promised, a constitutional structure which was more in line with *decentralisation* policies than *self-determination*, since they still kept the decisions on economic issues within the boundaries of a central British government.<sup>3</sup>

Social rights deal with immediate and long term people's demands such as popular education, abolition of "public" schools, expansion of higher education, full financial support for everyone who continues in full-time education beyond his school-leaving age, improvement of housing, hospital and other health facilities, minimum statutory wage, social benefits for those below the poverty line, legislation to ban the sale of council houses, mortgages at low cost rates, government loans at low interests rates for local government.<sup>4</sup>

The rights issue is partially interwoven with the rights of the citizen. The question of political rights in particular is concerned with *political pluralism*. As the *British Road to Socialism, 1968* expressed it:

Democratically organised political parties, including those hostile to socialism, would have the right to maintain their organisation, publications and propaganda, and to contest elections. With proportional representation the electors would operate their choice fully in contrast with the present unrepresentative, and in effect, two-party system. Elections would give the people the opportunity to discuss and modify policy and to decide what government they wanted.<sup>5</sup>

The *British Road to Socialism, 1968* was asking for a socialist state machine to replace the capitalist one because:

A socialist government requires a socialist state machine. Without this the political power of the people, expressed in the democratic decision of the electoral majority, cannot be effective nor can socialism be built.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-42.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 43-44.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

According to the *1968 Programme* in a socialist democracy civil liberties will be enhanced and extended. They would include: *Habeas Corpus*, freedom to think (!), work, travel, speak, dissent and believe, freedom of religious worship, respect for all religions, beliefs and creeds, separation of church from state.

The Programme included the idea of a written Bill of Rights in the form of a "code of citizen's rights, backed by the full force of the law"<sup>1</sup> and a judiciary not only independent of the executive but also having the form of a people's tribunal.

The judiciary would be independent of the executive...Magistrates would come from nominations by the trade unions, co-operatives, and other representative organisations.<sup>2</sup>

The question of democracy and pluralism was related to that of decentralisation and planning. According to the *British Road to Socialism, 1968* :

*A socialist government, seeking to extend democracy would decentralise the machinery of government and planning. Democratically elected regional councils would plan for economic and social development throughout the region. Town and country planning could be effectively undertaken as a result of nationalisation of the land, without the burden of compensation and with the exclusion of speculative building.*<sup>3</sup>

The democratic road to socialism was identified with decentralisation. But what did the party understand by "democracy"?

For the Communist Party of Great Britain in its transition towards its new positions, democracy was understood as being above classes, eternal and universal. In this way the Party denied the qualitative difference between proletarian and bourgeois democracy. In its essence this means the denial of the need for political struggle, the need for the working class and its allies to struggle for the seizure of state power, consequently the denial of the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As Lenin wrote in "On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat":

1. The chief reason why the 'socialists' do not understand the dictatorship of the proletariat is that they do not carry the idea of the class struggle to its logical conclusion. (cf. Marx 1852)  
The dictatorship of the proletariat is the *continuation* of the class struggle in new forms. That is the crux of the matter and that is what

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 61, emphasis added.



they do not understand. The proletariat as a *special class*, alone *continues* to wage its class struggle.<sup>1</sup>

Reformism in its Eurocommunist variant abstracts from the question endorsed by classical Marxism which is the historical point of rupture; thus in its theoretical conceptions it is unclear whether it asks for 'transformation' or 'integration', for 'revolution' or 'reform', seizure of political power by the new class, that is the broad democratic alliance, or overthrowing of the bourgeois class or compromise between the classes.

*The British Road to Socialism, 1968* has shown some signs of this approach although it still retained the language of classical Marxism. For example the Party's analysis of this phase of capitalism as *state monopoly capitalism* is in accordance with the Leninist theory but with one major difference in its implication. What we shall term: *Britishness*. The Party's problem in the 1968 edition was not monopolies as such but the kind of monopoly that interferes with the development of British firms without realising that there are no "national" monopolies but only *nation-based* ones. According to the *British Road to Socialism, 1968*, state monopoly capitalism was defined as follows:

It is not only economic power that is in the hands of the capitalist class. Political power, state power, is in the hands of the same class. The key state organs which exercise authority in Britain are under the control of the same great monopoly groups who control the wealth of the country and serve their interests.<sup>2</sup>

Monopoly power is seen as a result of the united acts of the capitalist class and groups of foreign monopolies. It is not clear if this is a critique of the power of monopolies or a critique of the capitalist system that gives rise to this form of power.

Accordingly the *British Road to Socialism, 1968* did not ask for the abolition of private property as such but only of monopoly property. Since it saw monopoly power in Britain as being expressed through the fusion of the capitalist class and monopoly power then the problem was to overthrow all the persons and ideas who act in favour of them and replace them with others, presumably socialists.

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<sup>1</sup>Vladimir I. Lenin, "On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", in Marx, Engels, Lenin, *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1984, pp. 424-425, emphasis in the original.

<sup>2</sup>*The British Road to Socialism*, 1968, op. cit., p. 9.

## II. 2. (iii) EUROCOMMUNISM, THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND *THE BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM 1977*

The events of Paris May 1968, the invasion in Czechoslovakia on the 20th of August 1968, the Hot Autumn of 1969 in Italy, the rise of the new social movements, the hippie culture of flower power, the Vietnam War and the grave socio-economic problems facing Britain had -in the long run- their impact on the Communist Party of Great Britain. The Party moved towards Eurocommunism in the 1970s. Eurocommunism<sup>1</sup> as a political movement emerged first in the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano) followed by the Spanish and the French sister parties. The roots of Eurocommunism are deep enough. A good account of the Eurocommunist view is given in Santiago Carrillo's book *'Eurocommunism' and the State* (1977)<sup>2</sup> and in Fernando Claudin's *Eurocommunism and Socialism* (1978).<sup>3</sup>

In the period following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and starting with Togliatti's interview with *Nuovi Argomenti*<sup>4</sup> at the 8th Congress of the Italian Communist Party, the leadership of the PCI began to develop an "Italian Road" which already contained some of the essential themes of what it is now known as Eurocommunism. The most important basic documents of Eurocommunism were the *Declaration of Livorno* issued by the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) and the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) in July 1975 and the *Rome Declaration* of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) and the Communist Party of France (PCF) in November 1975. In these documents the three West European parties provided the clearest statement of their strategy and their concept of socialism. The *Rome Declaration* was especially significant because it showed that -apart from some

<sup>1</sup>A bibliographical guide to Eurocommunism can be found in Olga Narkiewicz, *Eurocommunism, 1968-1986, A Select Bibliography*, Manshell Publishing Ltd, London-New York, 1987; for a discussion on the birth and development of Eurocommunism, see Ernest Mandel, *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism, The Bitter Fruits of 'Socialism in One Country'*, New Left Books, London, 1978; George Schwab (ed) *Eurocommunism: The Ideological and Political Theoretical Foundations*, European Studies, no 7, Aldwych Press, London, 1981; Paolo F. della Torre et al (eds) *Eurocommunism: Myth or Reality?*, Penguin Books, New York, 1979.

<sup>2</sup>Santiago Carrillo, *'Eurocommunism' and the State, ('Eurocomunismo' y Estado)*, translated from the Spanish by Nan Green and A. M. Elliott, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>Fernando Claudin, *Eurocommunism and Socialism, (Eurocomunismo y Socialismo)*, was first published by Siglo Veintiuno Editores, Madrid 1977), translated by John Wakeham, New Left Books, London, 1978.

<sup>4</sup>"The whole system is becoming polycentric. Within the Communist movement itself one cannot talk of a single guide, but of progress which is achieved by following roads which are often diverse.", in Palmiro Togliatti, "L' Intervista a *Nuovi Argomenti*", no 20, May-June 1956, *Nuovi Argomenti*, p. 116.

major tactical differences over NATO and the EEC- the French Party was almost completely aligned with the Italian positions.<sup>1</sup> The other important instance which marked the break of the Eurocommunists with the Kremlin was the Pan-European Conference of the Communist Parties in East Berlin on 29 June 1976.

A critique of the nature of the actual existing socialist system was one of the major clash points of Eurocommunism with Moscow. Perhaps the most decisive element in the break of Eurocommunism from Soviet style Communism was the new strategy advocated by the Eurocommunists namely, *the democratic road to socialism* which is related with the dropping of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Eurocommunist Parties' goal of adapting their conception of socialism and of a strategy of transition to the realities of advanced capitalism has so far taken the concrete form of the so-called "democratic roads to socialism" which each is now seeking to apply in practice within its own national circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

The idea is expressed in the *Rome Declaration* of the PCI and PCF in November 1975 and it can be summarised under the following points:

- Socialism will constitute a higher phase of democracy and freedom: democracy realised in the most complete manner.
- The march towards socialism and the building of a socialist society...must be achieved within the framework of a continuous democratisation of economic, social and political life.
- A socialist transformation of society presupposes public control over the principal means of production and exchange, their progressive socialisation, and implementation of democratic economic planning at the national level. The sector of small and medium-sized peasant farms, artisan industry and small and medium-sized industrial and commercial enterprises can and must fulfil a specific, positive role in the building of socialism.
- [The parties] declare themselves for...the lay nature and democratic functioning of the State...Democratic decentralisation of the State must give an increasingly important role to regional and local governments, which must enjoy broad autonomy in the exercise of their powers.
- For the plurality of political parties, for the right to existence and activity of opposition parties, for the free formation of majorities and minorities and the possibility of their alternating democratically.
- For the freedom of activity and autonomy of the trade unions.
- [The parties] attribute essential importance to the development of democracy in the workplace, allowing the workers to participate in the running of their firms, with real rights and extensive decision-making powers.

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<sup>1</sup>See Fernando Claudin, *Eurocommunism and Socialism*, NLB, London, 1978, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 65.



- Guarantee and development of all freedoms which are a product both of the great bourgeois-democratic revolutions and of the great popular struggles of this century, headed by the working class. [This is followed by the enumeration of these freedoms.]

- This [socialist] transformation can only be the result of great, powerful struggles and broad mass movements, uniting the majority of the people around the working class. It requires the existence, guarantee and development of democratic institutions fully representative of popular sovereignty and the free exercise of direct, proportional universal suffrage. It is in this framework that the two parties -which have always respected and will always respect the verdict of universal suffrage- conceive the rise of the working people to the leadership of the State.

- [The two parties] attach a value of principle to all these conditions of democratic life. Their position is not tactical, but derived from their analysis of the specific objective and historical conditions of their countries and from their reflection on international experiences as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Giorgio Napolitano in an interview with Eric Hobsbawm in *La Politique du parti communiste italien* (Paris 1976) declared that:

There was no doubt that we wanted to remove the idea that the party intended to collaborate with other political forces and play according to the rules of the democratic game only up to the moment when it became necessary to make the 'leap' to the installation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism; and that from that moment on our policies would be more and more like those that had marked the dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism in the Soviet Union. We tackled this misunderstanding openly.<sup>2</sup>

One of the prominent exponents of Eurocommunism was Santiago Carrillo, the former leader of the Communist Party of Spain. His view on the dictatorship of the proletariat can be found below:

I am convinced that the dictatorship of the proletariat is not the way to succeed in establishing and consolidating the hegemony of the forces of the working people in the democratic countries of developed capitalism...I am convinced that in these latter countries socialism is not only the decisive broadening and development of democracy, the negation of any totalitarian conception of society, but that the way to reach it is along the democratic road, with all the consequences which this entails.

In this sphere, and at the risk of being accused of heresy, I am convinced that Lenin was no more than half right when he said:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 65-67.

<sup>2</sup>Giorgio Napolitano in an "Interview" with Eric Hobsbawm in *La Politique du parti communiste italien*, Paris 1976, p. 42, cited in Claudin's *Eurocommunism...*, op. cit., p. 90.

"The transition from capitalism to communism, naturally, cannot fail to provide an immense abundance and diversity of political forms, but the essence of all of them will necessarily be a single one: *the dictatorship of the proletariat*.. (Collected Works, vol. 25, p. 413)"

He was no more than half right because the essence of all the various political forms of transition to socialism is, as we can judge today, *the hegemony of the working people*, while *the diversity and abundance of political forms* likewise entails the possibility of *the dictatorship of the proletariat not being necessary*.<sup>1</sup>

The above discussed conceptions found expression in the Communist Party's 1977 Programme . *The British Road to Socialism 1977*, which provides a good account of what was taking place in the Communist Party of Great Britain in the 1970s and its attempt to break with its Stalinist past and to prove itself a good partner in a "European Commonwealth".

The discussion will be based on the 5th edition (November 1977) of *The British Road to Socialism*, last revised in 1968. The 1977 edition was the result of a discussion of a draft document published in February 1977, which culminated in the 35th National Conference of the Communist Party of Great Britain in November 1977.<sup>2</sup> The key feature was the break with the Marxist-Leninist tradition and the move towards Eurocommunism. The main issues arising from the draft were: the role of social class, the re-emergence of the idea of a broad - democratic alliance,<sup>3</sup> political pluralism, a peaceful road to socialism and the election of a Labour Party government.<sup>4</sup>

The draft incorporated much of the rhetoric of the first edition of *The British Road to Socialism*, 1951. The Communist Party reinstated its allegiance to Marxism-Leninism as the official Party philosophy:

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<sup>1</sup>Santiago Carrillo, '*Eurocommunism' and the State*, op. cit., p. 154, emphasis in the original.

<sup>2</sup>*The British Road to Socialism 1977*, was first published by the Communist Party, in March 1978.

<sup>3</sup>See Mick Costello, "The Working Class and the Broad-Democratic Alliance", *Marxism Today*, June 1979.

<sup>4</sup>For a discussion on *The British Road to Socialism*, 1977, see Dave Cook, "The British Road to Socialism and the Communist Party", *Marxism Today*, December 1978; Dave Priscott, "The British Road to Socialism and the Communist Party", *Marxism Today*, February 1979; Bill Ward, "The British Road to Socialism and the Communist Party", *Marxism Today*, March 1979; Peter Smith, "The British Road to Socialism and the Communist Party", *Marxism Today*, April 1979; Brian Nicholls, "The British Road to Socialism and the Communist Party", *Marxism Today*, May 1979.

The *British Road to Socialism* is based on the theory of scientific socialism first elaborated by *Marx* and *Engels*, creatively applying that theory to the situation in Britain and the world.<sup>1</sup>

The Communist Party repeated its commitment to "democratic centralism" which:

...combines the democratic participation of the membership in centralised leadership capable of directing the entire Party.<sup>2</sup>

The Communist Party's interpretation of this phase of capitalism as "state monopoly capitalism" was also retained.<sup>3</sup> Their firm commitment to the redistribution of wealth through the means of "publicly-owned enterprises" and the organisation of the economy not as an end in itself but as a mean to achieve the flowering of all human potentialities that were suppressed under the capitalist system of production.<sup>4</sup> The faith of the Communist Party in socialism as the road to communist society was once again reaffirmed.

The working class was defined as:

those who sell their labour power, their capacity to work in return for a wage or salary, and who work under the direction of the employers.<sup>5</sup>

Employers were defined as those who own the means of production, distribution and exchange, and their agents. The Programme thus gives a broad definition of the working class. In addition, between the working class and the bourgeoisie (inclusive of the top managerial positions), there was an intermediate stratum consisting of small business, self-employed persons, small farmers, who should be won over to socialism.<sup>6</sup> This socialist victory, the road to socialism will be achieved:

...without civil war, by a combination of a socialist parliamentary majority and mass struggle outside parliament.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*The British Road to Socialism*, The Communist Party of Great Britain, London, 1977, p. 3, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>4</sup>See *The British Road to Socialism*, 1977, op. cit., pp. 38-40, on "Economic Policy".

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup>See *The British Road to Socialism*, 1977, op. cit., p. 21, on the role of the "Intermediate strata".

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

The new idea about class, in relation to the *1968 British Road to Socialism*, is the *psychological element* which was brought into the discussion.<sup>1</sup> As it was put in the Programme:

...the ruling class exercises a degree of coercion to maintain its rule. However, in Britain today it relies primarily on the fact that millions of people believe that the capitalist system is the natural way to organise society, that the present political system is truly democratic, and that there is no realistic or better alternative...Thus, as a result of a combination of the efforts of the ruling class and of people's own experiences and material circumstances, including the rise in living standards since the end of the last war, *there is a large measure of voluntary acceptance of capitalism.*<sup>2</sup>

The emphasis was not primarily on people's relationship to the means of production but rather on the way they were oppressed. Workers were oppressed according to their sex, their colour, their religion, etc, which made class one of the determinants of consciousness, not the main one, because:

...capitalism not only exploits people at work, it impinges on every aspect of their lives. Thus they react to it, and often struggle against its effects, in their communities, in their leisure activities, as men and women, black or white, young or old, Scottish, Welsh, Irish or English. So *movements and groupings develop which may not belong to a major class* (for example, students) or *embrace people from different classes and strata* (for example, black, national, women's, youth, environmental, peace and solidarity movements).<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note the *1977 Programme's* approach to the emergence of new social movements which according to the *Programme's* analysis they were based on such capitalist social relations which were not generated at the point of production, or, in other words, not directly deriving from the relations of production. The *British Road to Socialism, 1977* suggested that it was people's consciousness of oppression - which is a necessary but not sufficient factor in the understanding of one's relation to the system one lives in- rather than of people's class exploitation which was the key politicising factor. In this sense a dual consciousness arises and the problem for the *British Road to Socialism, 1977* is how to evaluate and mobilize these forces in favour of a "broad democratic alliance".

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<sup>1</sup>See *The British Road to Socialism, 1977*, op. cit., pp. 8-10, on "How the capitalist rule is maintained".

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 9, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 29, emphasis added.



Characteristically the *1977 Programme* attributes to the new social movements (women, blacks, etc.) a more privileged role than to the working class which, in its narrow definition as the industrial manual workforce, is in decline, according to the *British Road to Socialism, 1977*.

These new forms of struggle are praised in opposition to "traditional" ones, eg. trade unions militancy, wage struggles. Hence, the broad democratic alliance needs to be not only an expression of class forces, but of other important forces in society which emerge out of areas of oppression not always directly connected with the relations of production. As the Programme characteristically put it in relation to the question of the forces behind the formation of a 'broad democratic alliance':

...the broad democratic alliance needs to be not only an expression of class forces, but of other important forces in society which emerge out of areas of oppression not always directly connected with the relations of production.<sup>1</sup>

The two key elements of the notion of the "broad-democratic alliance" are the idea of democracy and the role of the State. Democracy was seen as a matter of fundamental principle rather than as a tactic or a step forward to capitalist transcendence. The extension of bourgeois democracy was demanded as an end in itself rather than as a situation that should be transcended in socialism. The authors' form of understanding of democracy compliments with their view of *the state as a relation of forces*, the latter reflected in the exercise of state power which is structured by the form of the state, the latter's form being seen as an outcome of the struggles taking place inside its institutional structures which in their turn are the result of the relations of forces which structure the state form as such.

The state is seeking -according to the 1977 Programme- the organisation of consent and the incorporation of popular masses, but at the same time the granting of a series of concessions from the ruling class corresponding to popular struggles. The *British Road to Socialism, 1977* view was that this process involved an extension of democratic representation as a form of equilibrium between the balance of social forces - the latter including different sectors of the bourgeoisie - and state power.

The Eurocommunist understanding present in this approach implies that, since these institutions are necessary for the organisation of the hegemony of the ruling class, the question faces the working class and its allies to find a way to win them on their own behalf. The main characteristics of this approach is that, first of all, it sees

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 29.



the state as neutral (a relation of forces finds expression in structures but these are not based on a certain mode of exploitation, rather they are the outcome of struggles taking place in concrete conjunctures and waged by social forces; without specific emphasis on class forces)<sup>1</sup>; and second, because the institutions they are talking about are based on the separation of the political from the economic, of the state from society; those institutions main role is to produce and reproduce social passivity in the first sphere, as concerned solely with politics, and perform individualist functions in the private domain. Eurocommunism does not seem to take these developments as a specific form of capitalist rule and thus confuses the extension of representative institutions which have not developed in the proper direction under bourgeois hegemonic rule with the socialist transformation of the existing institutions. As the 1977 (Eurocommunist) Programme put it:

Parliament, itself the product of past battles for democracy, can be, and needs to be, transformed into the democratic instrument of the will of the working class and its allies...Through the democratic transformation of society, including the state, in all the stages of struggle, democracy can be carried to its utmost limits, breaking all bourgeois restrictions on it, and creating the conditions for advance to socialism without armed struggle.<sup>2</sup>

This view of the State as a field of contradiction and struggle in general which can be transformed and democratised from within leaving the existing institutions untouched is rather problematic. The 1977 Programme optimistically proclaimed that:

With government and economic power in the hands of the working people they must use it to secure full control over the state institutions and complete their democratisation. This *would not mean abolishing existing democratic institutions*, but changing and improving them so that they would more effectively serve the needs of society, as well as creating new organisations where necessary. *Parliament would be the sovereign body in the land*, and Members of Parliament would exercise their powers as the elected representatives of the people...<sup>3</sup>

In the 1977 Programme the question of the nature of democracy is not raised. The Programme also makes no reference to the "dictatorship of the proletariat". The issue to be addressed here, is not that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is the "democracy of the working class" *ipso facto*, but that the term implies a transitional phase to a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-56, emphasis added.

classless, non-exploitative society. The *British Road to Socialism*, 1977, by excluding the first ("dictatorship of the proletariat") excludes the political and social implications of the latter (transitional type of state).

The Programme's differentiation from classical Marxism becomes more apparent in relation to the above questions; Marx and Engels in their early writings considered democracy as a fundamental element of the class struggle and a natural progress after feudal rule has ceased to exist. The positive element in democracy was not the *laissez-faire* principle of liberalism but the emancipatory possibilities for the free organization of the proletariat in order to advance the transformation of society to communism. Universal suffrage was one of the areas of struggle. Electoral reform within the framework of the abstract political state was seen as the demand for its dissolution and simultaneously as the withering away of bourgeois society as such. The representative system -bourgeois parliamentary democracy- was seen as a progressive form in comparison with absolute monarchy, where the exercise of authority lies with the monarch who has the privilege to decide for the common interest and good.

In classical Marxism democracy was not seen as the ultimate aim of the proletariat but as another form of alienation which opened the road to the socialist ideal through making public the differentiation between the power of the people with the power of private property. In *On the Jewish Question* (1843) Marx was in favour of the democratic system because of the right to elect and be elected on the one hand and the manifestation of the alienated form of separation between the state and civil society on the other, a non-existing form in traditional societies where there was a fusion of state and religious authority, (thus, *Cuius Regio Eius Religio*). Under the democratic system this fusion reproduces itself in the political level, the state as the political religion reproduces in the political level the duality between species being (*Gattungswesen*) and private being.<sup>1</sup>

Engels in his *Progress of Social Reform on the Continent* (1843) referred to Democracy as an "internal antithesis, unreal, nothing but hypocrisy."<sup>2</sup> According to

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<sup>1</sup>Feuerbach's analysis of God as the human essence in a transcendental level was used as a metaphor for the political God -the State-. As Marx wrote: "The members of the political state are religious because of the dualism between individual life and species life, between the life of society and political life. They are religious inasmuch as man considers political life, which is far removed from his actual individuality, to be his true life and inasmuch as religion is here the spirit of civil society and the expression of the separation and distance of man from man." in Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, (1843), in *Early Writings*, Penguin Books in association with *New Left Review*, London, 1975, (rep. 1984), with an introduction by Lucio Colletti, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup>Friedrich Engels (1843) *Der Fortschritt der sozialen Reform auf dem Kontinent*, (*Progress of Social Reform on the Continent*), in Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Band 1, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1964, (my translation, -F. D.).

Engels the ideals of freedom and equality are in reality the expression of a new slavery and a new authoritarianism but "the real freedom and real equality are identical with communism".<sup>1</sup>

Again in Marx and Engels' *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League*, March 1850:

Not the extension of democracy but the bankruptcy of the state should be the aim of the workers <sup>2</sup>

The perfect example of the form of the democratic state of the working class is seen by both Marx and Engels in the Paris Commune of 1871. Engels in his Preface (1891) to Marx's *The Civil War in France* (1871) wrote:

Of late the Social-Democratic philistine has once more been filled with the wholesome terror at the words: Dictatorship of the proletariat. Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like. Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.<sup>3</sup>

For Marx and Engels democracy was seen as a transitional phase, necessary for the political awareness of the working class from the point of view of the development of class consciousness and of the formation of political alliances. Democracy was never analysed as an end in itself but as a specific mode of presentation of capitalist development. The overcoming of bourgeois democracy was seen as merely part of the necessary overcoming of all mediations, including the parliamentary system as a system based not on real representation but on a system of mediations between the political and the economic. In contradiction with the above approaches, the *British Road to Socialism*, 1977 is not taking these mediations as appearances of an exploitative society but as the point of departure, viewing it as the real essence of reality. Hence, the authors of the Programme call for an extension of the institutional framework of bourgeois democracy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 487, (my translation, -F. D.).

<sup>2</sup>*Address of the Central Committee to the League*, March 1850, in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup>Friedrich Engels, Preface (1891) to Karl Marx's *The Civil War in France*, (1871) in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983, p. 189.

<sup>4</sup>*The British Road to Socialism*, 1977, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

The question of reform or revolution is related with the above and also with the omission of the term "dictatorship of the proletariat". The Communist Party's 1977 Programme understood socialist revolution as "not a single act, but a process of struggle"<sup>1</sup> based on the mobilization of a broad alliance of social forces for the democratisation of all spheres of social life. The revolutionary process will be without civil war and by a combination of parliamentary, other institutional and extra-parliamentary struggle in order to establish a pluralist socialism with the free exercise of all political rights and the free functioning of all political parties including those hostile to socialism.

Through the democratic transformation of society, including the state, in all the stages of the struggle, democracy can be carried to its utmost limits, breaking all bourgeois restrictions on it, and creating the conditions for advance to socialism without armed struggle. The achievement of state power by the working class and its allies will not be a single act, but the culmination of a process of struggle.<sup>2</sup>

In this case the question was solved in favour of gradualism and parliamentarism, excluding any revolutionary, i. e. violent way to socialism (civil war). John Gollan, the former General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain, in his book *Reformism and Revolution* (1977) referred to a non-insurrectionary advance to socialism:

The issue for a left government is to democratise the state not to smash it up.<sup>3</sup>

And also:

So what the BRS [*The British Road to Socialism* - F. D.] did was to replace one strategy for socialist revolution (insurrection and soviets), the product of one historical situation, with another (no civil war, and the winning and transformation of parliament), the product of an entirely different historical situation. The possibility of winning a parliamentary political majority has existed in Britain for years because of its overwhelmingly working class social composition. The possibility of transforming parliament depends both on its sovereignty and extra-parliamentary political struggle, the latter in many ways being the most decisive. It is not that we chose one strategy in preference to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>John Gollan, *Reformism and Revolution*, with a memoir by Gordon McLennan, The Communist Party of Great Britain, London, October 1978, p. 76.

another. The actual conditions required a new strategy corresponding to new conditions.<sup>1</sup>

The term "dictatorship of the proletariat" was first omitted from the 1951 edition of the *British Road to Socialism* and it was the first to move away from the 1935 *Programme For A Soviet Britain*.<sup>2</sup> Harry Pollitt in his book *Looking Ahead* (1947)<sup>3</sup> outlined an alternative strategy for revolutionary change in Britain and argued that civil war and the establishment of Soviets are not the way forward in Britain but only in 1976 did the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain give the reasons for the exclusion of the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the party newspaper *Morning Star*, November 16, 1976.

But to use the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in the programme would be misleading. First, we consider the word 'dictatorship' completely inappropriate of the Socialist society we want to build, and our concept is the direct opposite of the connotations it has acquired in the present century, especially as the result of the rise of fascism. Second, in this century it has become historically associated with the concept of achieving Socialism through armed insurrection, and with the specific forms including the Soviets and the one-party system, in which Socialism was built in the Soviet Union. These are not our perspective. Third, although Marx, Engels and Lenin, all made clear that the dictatorship of the proletariat was an alliance between the working class and its allies, the term itself does not make this clear. The word 'proletariat' is often taken to mean the traditional core of the working class, the industrial manual workers. Thus the term could imply, to contemporary readers, a dictatorship of this core over the rest of the population, which is not our position. For these reasons we do not consider it appropriate to use the term in our programme.<sup>4</sup>

Gollan attempted to find a justification of the *British Road to Socialism*, 1977 positions against insurrection in Lenin's and Marx's writings wherever the latter "make a distinction between the repressive state apparatus to be "amputated" and the state's "legitimate function" to be restored to responsible agents of society".<sup>5</sup>

The implication is that one should ask for an extension of bourgeois democracy and democratic rights rather than for their suppression and transcendence. The Programme especially concentrates its focus on the importance of the existence of rights and their enumeration

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>*For A Soviet Britain*, The Communist Party Programme, 1935.

<sup>3</sup>See Harry Pollitt, *Looking Ahead*, The Communist Party, London, 1947.

<sup>4</sup>*Morning Star*, November 16, 1976, quoted in John Gollan, *Reformism and Revolution*, op. cit., p.

<sup>5</sup>Gollan, *Reformism.....*, op. cit., p. 65.



Civil liberties won through the centuries would be consolidated and extended. These would include: habeas corpus to protect citizens from arbitrary detention; the right to be tried by jury; the right to strike and to demonstrate, associate and organise; freedom to think, work, travel, publish, speak, dissent, act and believe, *subject only to those limitations required in any ordered and just society to protect citizens from interference and exploitation by others and to safeguard democracy*. There would be freedom of religious worship and propaganda in public or in private, equality for all religious beliefs and creeds, and separation of church from state. All discrimination against homosexuals would be ended and their full civil rights guaranteed.<sup>1</sup>

Contradictory also seems to be the 1977 Programme's analysis of the problem of legitimisation of the capitalist system on the one hand and of how capitalist rule is maintained on the other. Although the Programme recognises the coercive character of the state apparatus and the role of the ideological mechanisms of the state in reproducing the dominant ideology, paradoxically it describes capitalist rule as having "a large measure of voluntary acceptance". Bourgeois ideology is not seen -according to the above approach- as in classical Marxism as an organised class reaction to another class or as one of the ways of shaping societal images and attitudes. On the one hand the conception of the Programme leaves open the road to choice -if the capitalist way of living is something that people "voluntarily" accept. On the other hand the Programme rejects the concept of "false consciousness" that is that this "voluntary acceptance" is form-determined and guarantees the very reproduction of class domination.

The 1977 *British Road to Socialism* marks a departure from the old days of Stalinist dominance and a clear move towards Eurocommunism; in fact it was the first Eurocommunist Programme launched in Britain. The influence of Eurocommunism is predominant in the notion of the broad democratic alliance, which implies the rejection of the revolutionary subject of change. The working class base for socialist advance was radically challenged with the advancement of the importance of resistance through other non-class based movements (women, youth, ethnic minorities, diverse lifestyles). New social movements' opposition to capitalist rule married with class struggle into an alliance against state monopoly capitalism's hegemony. The rejection of social-democratic parliamentarism and old-style insurrectionary politics in favour of a "third road" to socialism through the construction of the broad alliance and a combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forms of struggle together with the abandonment of one of the cornerstones of Marxism, "the dictatorship of the

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<sup>1</sup>*The British Road to Socialism*, 1977, op. cit., pp. 57-58, emphasis added.

proletariat", are the radical elements in the 1977 *British Road to Socialism* which was the cause of another split in the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Acceptance of parliamentarism and the extension of democracy, on the one hand, and political pluralism together with the challenge to "democratic centralism" and the role reserved for the working class, on the other, marks the new position of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Its Eurocommunist approach to democracy as a matter of fundamental political principle, rather than as a tactic, and the equation of representative with direct forms of bourgeois democracy as transformable to socialist forms of democratic organisation, together with the conception of the state as a relation of forces rather than as an expression of class domination<sup>1</sup>, marks a departure from classical Marxist analysis.

From the point of view of the theoretical justification of the Communist Party's new-thinking, the theory that came in to fill the vacuum was structuralism. The idea of "intermediate classes", the separation of the repressive from the legitimate state apparatus can be found in Poulantzas and Althusser's structuralism.<sup>2</sup> As for the new social movements, Marcuse and Gorz can be traced behind their appraisal, (although the Programme does not go as far as explicitly rejecting the working class role as the primary revolutionary subject of change as the above mentioned theorists' proclaim).

The Eurocommunist view of the state and the transition to socialism in a Eurocommunist fashion can be found in Santiago Carrillo's book: *'Eurocommunism' and the State* (1977) and in the idea of a hegemonic capitalist rule in Gramsci's theory of hegemony.

The idea of defending capitalist democracy can be found in *'Eurocommunism' and the State*:

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<sup>1</sup>In the classical Marxist literature the state is seen as a "public power" that develops at a certain stage in the division of labour, usually identified with the emergence of a mode of production based on the exploitation of one class by another, and which involves the emergence of a distinct system of government monopolised by officials who specialise in administration and/or repression. This view of the state can be found in F. Engels (1884) *The Origins of the Family Private Property and the State*, (in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983) and in V. I. Lenin (1917) *The State and Revolution*, (in V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works in One Volume*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977). In the Marxist-Leninist revision of state theory, the state is seen as an *instrument* of class rule. A fundamental problem with this thesis is the tendency to assume that the state as an instrument is *neutral* and can be used with equal effectiveness by any class or social force that happens to gain state power. As it is evident from the discussion of the problem of the state in this thesis, we endorse a concept of state theory that has a 'relational' derivation in so far as it tries to see the relation of state and society as a relation between capital and labour.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the structuralist approach and its influence on the political developments in the British Left see next section of this thesis.

*...democracy is not only not consubstantial with capitalism, but its defence and development require the overthrow of that social system; that in the historical conditions of today, capitalism tends to reduce and in the end to destroy democracy, which is why democracy must proceed to a new dimension with a socialist regime.<sup>1</sup>*

The idea of a peaceful road to socialism:

*The socialist revolution is no longer a necessity only to the proletariat, but for the immense majority of the population as well. In these conditions, the idea of the alliance of the forces of labour and culture, of the new historic bloc and, in general, the question of anti-monopolist alliances, acquires decisive importance.<sup>2</sup>*

The justification behind the 'broad anti-monopolist alliance':

But it (Communist Party -FD) no longer regards itself as the *only* representative of the working class, of the working people, and the forces of culture.<sup>3</sup>

And:

The party does not set itself the aim of becoming the dominant force in the State and society or of imposing its ideology on them on an official footing.<sup>4</sup>

And this is linked with the call for a 'new political formation', the historic bloc of the anti-monopolist alliance.

The idea of the *new political formation* is linked with that of the hegemony of the bloc of the forces of labour and culture in society.<sup>5</sup>

The *new political formation* would represent:

...something like a confederation of political parties and various social organisations, which would act on a consensus basis, respecting the individuality and independence of each of the parties and organisations.

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<sup>1</sup>Santiago Carrillo, '*Eurocommunism*' and the State, op. cit., p. 40, italics in the original.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 40, italics in the original.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.100, emphasis in the original.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 102, emphasis added.

It would not be a super-party, since each would preserve, in the final analysis, their own freedom of action; nor would it be a merely electoral or transient coalition; it would be inspired by a desire to continue in existence in order to realise common ideals.<sup>1</sup>

Characteristically the 'Eurocommunist' approach, as this was discussed so far, is not the rejection of Marxism in practice, but its belief in the third road between social democracy and soviet type of communism. The Eurocommunist call for a "third road" to socialism implies that it is possible to transform society by simultaneously rejecting the theory of class antagonism and replacing it by the idea of consensus of the largest majority of the population in the form of an 'anti-monopolist broad democratic alliance', (or what they name "*advanced democracy*"), keeping all the state institutions intact in the belief that they can be progressively emptied of their class content, and applying an incrementalist advance to socialism.

These ideas can be traced back to the Germany of 1910, in the debate between Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Kautsky's two strategies for socialist advance were *the strategy of assault* (*Niederwerfungsstrategie*) and *the attrition strategy* (*Ermattungsstrategie*), with a clear preference to the latter. The attrition war is one in which each side waits for the other to wear itself out. So, according to this strategy, the workers, instead of a direct confrontation with their class enemies, should try to divide them and provoke a gradual erosion of their will with the purpose not only to beat them but also to prevent them from going out fighting. Then it will be possible to take them down without much effort and casualties.<sup>2</sup>

This strategy failed; instead of leading to the collapse of capitalist rule it led to the destruction of the German working class step by step first in 1914, 1918, 1923 and finally in 1933 with the victory of Nazism.

The "strategy of attrition" which has been adopted by the Eurocommunists lies with their belief in the piecemeal transformation of the relations of production. But historical experience seems to indicate that an incrementalist route to socialism far from proving an effective strategy has more normally been the crucial political mechanism through which the working class has been incorporated into a subordinate position within a strengthened bourgeois order; alternatively when the "strategy of attrition" has been more resolute, it has been the harbinger, not of socialism, but of the violent suppression of the working class by repressive capitalist states. This essential

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>See Karl Kautsky, *Selected Political Writings*, edited and translated by Patric Goode, Macmillan, London, 1983.

problem of reform or revolution, to which the 1910 debate did not seem to give a definite answer, is not satisfactory tackled in the *1977 Programme* which seems to adopt a "middle position" between reform and transcendence of the capitalist society.

The other issue for concern is the Eurocommunists approach to *alliances*. The 'historic compromise', the historic bloc, the broad anti-monopolist alliance and so on are a manifestation of Eurocommunism's rejection of the decisive weight of the working class in the advanced capitalist states. In the Eurocommunist conception the recomposition of the workforce is taken as a reduction in the numbers of the proletariat. Eurocommunism's understanding of the working class as consisting only of the manual workforce, comes into contradiction with the classical Marxism definition, according to which, the working class consists of all these people who sell their labour power, -their only private property- in return for a wage and whose surplus labour is appropriated by the capitalists in the form of surplus value. In the 1977 Programme there is no attempt to apply this definition to the working class of our times and consequently to pose the question whether the "new working class" is still a part of the working class, or whether the wage earners (excluding those occupying the higher ranks of management) are the working class of today. (In this sense, one could legitimately claim that the working class has not diminished and this should not be the basic argument in favour of an alliance strategy.)

These are some very brief remarks on the Eurocommunist approach and its application to Britain. It is very interesting to see where this process of rethinking led the Communist Party of Great Britain after the evolution of Thatcherism in 1979 (cf., Chapter IV).

### II. 3. OBSERVATIONS ON THE DEBATES

In this Section we will recapitulate the main issues arising from the debates on the future of socialism in a changing Britain from 1956 to 1978.

The whole debates are interwoven around the everlasting issues of a class ridden society, the role of the state, class and the way to the transition to socialism.

*Labourist Right-wing Revisionism* in Britain had its heyday during the 1950s and early 1960s. *Labourist Left-wing Revisionism* in the form of "*technocratic collectivism*" was predominant from the mid 1960s till the breakdown in the late 1970s. *Marxist Revisionism* in the form of *Eurocommunism* in the Communist movement of Britain made its appearance in the mid 1970s. We are interested in looking at these currents in order to show that first of all ideologies and consequently theories are not neutral -they always represent societal forces- and also that the period



(1956-1978) marks a watershed for the re-thinking of the same values in Britain of today. The aim is to show how, from revisionist theory in the shape of "embourgeoisement in affluence", the Left of today discuss the thesis of "embourgeoisement in recession", with the only difference that the revisionists, of the 1950s and 1960s were more consistent in their rejection of Marxism as the propelling force of working class advance than the Left in the 1980s who reject Marxism using Marxist concepts. The Labour Party and the Communist Party were chosen in order to show what reformism represents for working class parties, and also the way a theory of struggle has been modified and presented as a theory of adaptation to the "New Times", the wholesale rejection of the XI of the *Theses on Feuerbach*: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it."<sup>1</sup>

The 'embourgeoisement' thesis serves as a good example of the revisionist social democrats' understanding of the state and its class nature: they simply reject the latter by substituting it with a theory of class harmony. The 'deproletarianization' theory fitted well with the welfare conception of social democracy, that is, that there should be collective provision for social needs based on a flat conception of humanism and universality, regardless of economic position in relation to the means of production.

Socialism to the old-revisionists was an *ethical ideal* concerning social relationships. Socialism denoted the realisation of certain values: predominantly, for Crosland, the abolition of poverty, social welfare, equal rights, co-operation and economic efficiency.<sup>2</sup> Socialism was seen as a set of moral values; social justice and social welfare; freedom as a *means* and equality as the ultimate *end* of human development. The way forward was seen in the image of a higher growth and economic efficiency capable of generating income to fund the welfare programme.

The classical Marxist thesis of the continuous immiseration of the working class was challenged by the revisionist theory of the continuous embourgeoisement of the proletariat. The classical Marxist thesis of the middle classes sinking to the proletariat was replaced by the thesis of the working class occupying more and more the middle ground due to increasing living standards which helped to generate middle class attitudes and beliefs, and finally the postulate of a capitalist ruling class was replaced with the theory of class harmony and co-operation.

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), Appendix in *Early Writings*, introduced by Lucio Colletti, Penguin Books in association with *New Left Review*, Harmondsworth, 1975, p. 423.

<sup>2</sup>See C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, Jonathan Cape, London, October 1956.

Governments of the social democratic variant were eager to achieve concessions from the working class, on the one hand, and collaboration with capital, on the other, with the apparent aim of managing society in the interest of the wage-earners, the latter being broadly defined. Actually their main preoccupation was to retain office, because to them it was better to operate as a "bad" government than to stay a "good" opposition, hence, their preoccupation with elections and psephology. *Must Labour Lose?* serves as a classical paradigm of this tendency. Electoral success was more important than party ideology and policies which could be easily sacrificed on the altar of Shylock's pound, not of flesh but of changing voting patterns.

The cornerstone of the revisionist thesis is the understanding of the *state* as *neutral*, above classes, as a manager of capitalism. As G. Burdeau (1970) put it:

More or less consciously we have the feeling that we are all passengers of the same boat. Of course, there are those who travel on the tourist class and those who share the captain's table; but from the moment where there is a common agreement for the purpose of the journey there is no obstacle in ensuring that the majority will enjoy the well-being of the minority. Besides, if the boat sinks everybody will drown.<sup>1</sup>

This image of the state does not imply the denial of all differences between social categories; but it presents those differences not as an antagonism between classes, but as non-antagonistic differences in status. The ship is a form of organisation that most people should accept in order to reach the port safely, the port called "*the affluent society*". If the state is given this technical dimension, then every discussion about the state ceases to exist. This is the essence both of the modernisation and the "technostructure" theses.<sup>2</sup>

To the revisionists, this does not mean that it does not make any difference which party holds power, they simply believe that Labour would do best because of its moral attitude towards the "have nots", the "underdog". What really matters is a redistribution of income and wealth between classes in order to get a better societal balance which would help to avoid conflict and produce harmony.

Their understanding of social relations based on status differentials made them develop a liberal idea of citizenship and a technocratic notion of socialism. Social democratic citizenship discourse was interwoven around the issues of universal welfare based on equality of opportunity, an élitist meritocratic society and a caretaker

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<sup>1</sup>G. Burdeau, *L'État*, Paris, Seuil, 1970, p. 154, (my translation, -F. D.).

<sup>2</sup>See Michel Miaille, *L'État du droit*, Critique du droit, Vol. II, Grenoble-Paris: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble - François Maspero, 1978.

state. Accordingly their understanding of socialism did not go further than the bourgeois democratic form of representation, modified with ideas of freedom and equality but with no reference to the class nature of society which produces those inequalities. As Crosland put it:

We already enjoy in Britain a form of political democracy which is strikingly stable, which in no way partakes of mob rules or mass violence, and which, based as it is on a long liberal tradition, is exceptionally tolerant of dissent. Even if we attained a greater degree of equality, we should still retain our Parliamentary institutions, our liberal tradition, and a national character strongly attached to personal freedom.<sup>1</sup>

The focus for change was not the social system itself but the mode of access to privileges within the system. Their citizenship theory -as any citizenship theory- implied a political strategy different from that of a class theory of history, a distinction between citizen as a political persona and man as a private being, a separation of the political and social from the economic. Again as Crosland put it:

Economic Politics are characteristic of any country to which a Marxist analysis might plausibly be applied. Thus they are typical of periods of growing pauperisation, depression and mass unemployment, falling real wages, and a sharp polarisation of classes. It is at such times, when a direct clash of economic interest occurs between clear-cut productive classes against a background of material scarcity, that economic issues are the main determinant of political attitudes. Social Politics are characteristic of periods of prosperity, rising income, full employment, and inflation, when attention is diverted from economic to social issues not only for the obvious reason that as living standards rise, and the problem of subsistence fades away, people have more time and mental energy to spare for non-economic discontents...<sup>2</sup>

This élitist thesis of the role of economy and politics was in line with the formal reality of rising living standards for the workers in post-war Britain and had the support of the trade unions who "never had it so good", but was not in line with the actual reality of the continuation of exploitation.

On what ground can one reject the *embourgeoisement* thesis and the revisionists' theoretical justification of capitalism? The problem lies with the practical implication of this theory which rules out any attempt at overcoming capitalism, on the basis that the latter has undergone a qualitative transformation through a nexus of new

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<sup>1</sup>C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, Jonathan Cape, London, October 1956, (second impression, June 1957), p. 247.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 196-7.

developments (welfare state and managerial revolution). The Keynesian Welfare State was basically seen by the old-revisionists as entirely the outcome of a qualitative change in the inner essence of the capitalist state but a quantitative response to the demands of the post-war working class against a particular state form. The capitalist state had to restructure the relation between political and civil society once again and invent a new form of exploitation. The "affluent society" model was approached as the outcome of the post-war boom, which in its turn was the result of higher state expenditure for the regeneration of higher rates of profit based on the regeneration of the demand side of the economy. Public ownership and nationalisation served that purpose. To the revisionists' these were mere *means* to achieve a better planning in order to manage capitalism and achieve higher growth which would help to finance welfare programmes. To the left-wingers, on the contrary, it was not a mere matter of planning which would "serve the nation" but of planning for transferring power from the capitalist class to the working class, which is why the debate on Clause IV (4) caused so much controversy within the ranks of the Labour Party.

The debate on public ownership and nationalisation made apparent the Left's understanding of the State, class, socialism and the party's role. We have already discussed the ideological and policy changes in the Communist and the Labour Party and now we would like to turn to an examination of the theoretical background of these changes as well as the theoretical concepts of the British New Left.



## CHAPTER III: TRANSITION TO "NEW TIMES"

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter will examine the theoretical background to the ideological and policy changes in the British Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain and the development of the theoretical concepts of the British New Left.

Since 1956 and especially since 1968 one can trace the changes in the theoretical conceptions of the Communist Party of Great Britain in the discussions of the nature of the state and the thesis of State Monopoly Capitalism as these are manifested in the party's documents and especially in the *British Road to Socialism*, 1968, despite the fact that formally the Party still claims a Marxist-Leninist character. These developments that can be characterised as Eurocommunist positions have extensive similarities with the developments of a phenomenon that was branded in classical Marxism as "revisionism" in the controversy between Lenin and Kautsky and Bernstein and Luxembourg on the nature of the capitalist state and its transcendence.

Section I is concerned with the conceptualisation of the state in classical Marxist theory which is going to be discussed alongside the implications of this concept in the analysis of such phenomena as democracy and parliamentarism. A discussion of the "revisionist" theses on the issue of democracy and a critique of their understanding from a classical Marxist standpoint (cf., Lenin, Luxembourg) will be explored. Special emphasis will be placed on the analysis of the concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat and social class in both the classical Marxist and the "revisionist" approaches and also on the problem of the advance to socialism. The latter problematic is closely related to the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat which is going to be discussed as an issue which is negatively related to the Eurocommunist developments.

Section II discusses the conceptualisations and problematics of the New Left in Britain and their critique of Labourism. The grasping of the theoretical premises of the New Left's advocacies is crucial for the understanding of the historical developments in the transition to the "New Times". It is our belief that this discussion will be helpful in drawing the boundaries on what the term "New Left" represents to the extent that the New Left current includes socialist and left wing groupings like the ones round the *New Left Review* and the *Socialist Register* journals as well as individuals that are either members of more than one left group or of no group at all.

And finally in Section III we will focus our attention on the theoretical formulations of modern theoreticians whose thought was used on the one hand for the theoretical foundation of the developments in the British Left and for an understanding of the new



realities that the Left were confronted in their analysis of Thatcherism on the other. Such theorists, among others, were Gramsci, Poulantzas and Aglietta. It is clear that within the framework of this thesis a detailed/thorough presentation of those theorists approaches becomes unattainable. Hence, we will restrict ourselves in presenting those arguments in their theories that destined to play a major role in the theoretical and policy developments that this thesis is concerned.

### III. 1. STATE, REVISIONISM AND THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

One of the main problems with which the Communist Party was confronted and from the answer given, its future development was influenced, was the relation between *state-form* and *property-dominant class*. According to classical Marxism the capitalist state is the product of the division of society into antagonistic classes; it is the mechanism of the capitalist class for the preservation and reproduction of the relations of production. The capitalist state's primary purpose is the controlling and suppression of the opposition arising from the antagonism between classes with different material interests, through the elimination or incorporation of conflict.

According to the classical Marxist analysis, the *State* makes its appearance at a certain stage of the development of the forces of production and is the result of the division of labour, private property and the consequent division of society into classes.<sup>1</sup> By the term "State" we mean the whole complex of institutions and relations of a certain mode of production that exist in class ridden societies under a central authority, formally placed outside and above civil society, which acts as a political society and whose most advanced form is the capitalist state's formation, a social formation historically determined by a given mode of production.

By *state power* we mean the outcome of the struggles taking place between the antagonistic classes of the social formation struggling over this appropriation which includes the base and the superstructure of the historical formation, that is the political, the economic and the ideological instances of the latter. State power is about a social class or fraction of a class that holds power. But the state is not state power alone; it is predominantly the *state apparatus*, that is (a) all the complex institutions developed by the dominant class in order to reproduce its power over the dominated classes and (b)

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<sup>1</sup>See cf., Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1965; F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in Karl Marx/ Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983.

the personnel of the state which carries them out. It is important in analysing the role of the state to make this separation between power and organisation of power. In this sense the state is not taken as neutral and above classes but as the outcome of class struggle. The struggle over the reproduction of the relations of production is the result of who controls the machinery of government, not of who nominally exercise state power.

Within the capitalist mode of production the state can take different *forms*, it can be an absolutist state, of the period of primitive accumulation, a *laissez-faire* liberal state of the period of extended reproduction, a social democratic or a Keynesian-Welfare social democratic variant, a Bonapartist, a Fascist or a Nazi type of régime in periods of crisis, but all these forms of state do not change its *type* and its *nature*, which remain capitalist. Different régimes and forms of government are possible as long as they do not challenge the basis of the state, that is, its class character, which means the eternalization of the extraction of surplus value for capital's sake and the safeguarding of the continuous subordination of the expropriated classes of the capitalist formation, mainly the working class. All these different forms correspond to the development of the forces of production and their continuous conflict with the relations of production in every given historical epoch.

The main characteristic of the bourgeois state is that it is *formally* placed "outside and above society" but at the same time it is dependent on it. This type of differentiation between state and society is the result of the division of labour and the formation of classes. Its function is to keep the peace between social classes whose interests are irreconcilable and to reproduce the relations of production which hold these interests together. In its bourgeois form, the members-citizens in their dual role exist in internal disagreement since the state is the only central element which cements their dual role as citizens (politics) and private members (economics). The general interest is nothing but "an imaginary form of collective life" in contrast to the real community, which is the communist collectivity according to Marx. This critique of bourgeois democracy goes beyond the critique of liberalism as the latter is based philosophically on the Kantian notion of free will and subsequently the critique of civil rights and law as epiphenomena and mystifications of the egoistic nature of a society based on free competition.<sup>1</sup>

Marx analyses the concepts of freedom and equality as the mediators of exploitation: as forms that come into existence in the sphere of exchange and also as

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<sup>1</sup>See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1965; see also Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State* and *On the Jewish Question*, in *Early Writings*, op. cit.

the legal-political forms of the market which set the norms of behaviour between people. Equality is analysed as a social relation which is the result of the act of exchange between legally (formal) equal individuals.<sup>1</sup> Exchange presupposes free individuals and the appropriation of the other person's private property through one's own free will and not through political constraint. Their common interest lies in the legal power of the norms of the free and equal exchange guaranteed by the State. The latter is the guarantor in the general level of all acts expressing individual interests. "The general interest is precisely the generalisation of all the individualistic interests".<sup>2</sup> The exploitation process takes place behind and within this legal framework of freedom and equality.

In the process of the historical development of bourgeois societies from the 19th to the 20th century, the Marxist discussions focussed -amongst other issues- upon such questions as the nature of the state as a "collective capitalist"<sup>3</sup> or to the question of the state's "relative autonomy"<sup>4</sup> even against the power of the monopolies if it is to serve the long term interests of capital in general. Lenin pointed out that the expansion of the contradictions of capitalism in its imperialist stage, the internal antithesis of capital in its process of valorisation, leads to the emergence of monopoly and the genesis of state monopoly capitalism, which is: "the merger of the gigantic force of capitalism with the gigantic force of the state into a mechanism bringing together millions of people into the organisation of state capitalism; the formation of state capitalism; of state monopoly."<sup>5</sup>

Imperialism -the era of bank capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, of the development of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism- has clearly shown an extraordinary strengthening of the "state-machine" and an unprecedented growth in its bureaucratic and military apparatus in connection with the intensification of repressive measures against the proletariat both in the monarchical and in the freest, republican countries.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Karl Marx *Grundrisse*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1973; see also Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1983, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx *Grundrisse*, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Karl Marx/ Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> See Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, Verso, London, 1979.

<sup>5</sup> Vladimir I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *Selected Works in One Volume*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977; see also Rudolf Hilferding, *Finance Capital*, (1910), Routledge and Kegan Paul, London-Boston, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Vladimir I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, in *Selected Works in One Volume*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 284.

According to Lenin although there is a fusion between monopolies and state power this does not equate the state apparatus with state power. The relation between state and monopolies is that of identification/non-identification at the same time. The state still functions as an "ideal" collective capitalist but at the same time it becomes more and more a "real" collective capitalist having to interfere directly in the sphere of production. The state and the monopolies have as a mutual aim the reproduction of capitalism but the state differs from the monopolies to the extent of the role it is called to fulfil and the methods used for its realisation in the political, social, economical and ideological reproduction of the relations of production and in the corresponding mechanisms both ideological and repressive.

The *British Road to Socialism, 1968*, breaks with the Leninist tradition in its treatment of the state monopoly capitalism thesis in a reductionist manner mainly as an economic system. The result was to attribute capitalism's inefficiencies to the great monopolies and not to the class relations and antagonisms within the capitalist system.

In parallel the "revisionist" tendencies that influenced the European Left seemed to move away from any such understanding of this form of bourgeois relations and its function. Hence the belief in the neutrality of the institutions and the possibility of their transformation without smashing the state apparatus. Thus the defence of democracy which is a common feature not only to the social democrats but also to the Eurocommunists. *Democracy* is analysed in terms of *democracy in general*, that is without asking the question whose democracy and for which class? Liberal notions of democracy as a universal principle are taken up and applied equally to bourgeois and communist society. By doing that they do not seem to take into consideration the class nature of democracy which is, according to classical Marxism, not only a characteristic of the capitalist era but of all class societies. Democracy in the ancient Greek Polis was the democracy of the male slave owners, the slaves were excluded from participation, women too. Democracy in Rome was the democracy of the Roman citizens of the *Pax Romana* alone, slaves were considered under the Roman Law as chattels. Democracy in the first phase of the bourgeois state was the democracy of the property owners and in the modern bourgeois state is still the democracy of the exploiters.

The issue of democracy is related, according to classical Marxism, to the key problem of class struggle: *the dictatorship of the proletariat*, that is the transition to socialism and whether this road will be "democratic" or "dictatorial". The question of the tactics posed in this way is differentiated from the classical Marxist analysis precisely because it is based on the form of democracy in general and dictatorship in general. The liberal essence of this question is analysed from a classical Marxist



standpoint by Lenin in his *Pravda* article, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky" (October 1918):

Kautsky has renounced Marxism by forgetting that *every* state is a machine for the suppression of one class by another, and that the most *democratic* bourgeois republic is a machine for the oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, the proletarian state, which is a machine for the suppression of *the bourgeoisie by the proletariat*, is not a "form of governing", but *a state of a different type*. Suppression is necessary because the bourgeoisie will always furiously resist being expropriated.<sup>1</sup>

The rejection of the dictatorship of the proletariat by the Labour Party and the (Euro) Communist Party of Great Britain is formulated on liberal grounds. The main points of the Communist Party's understanding of the concept of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" and the role of violence in history have strikingly similarities with the ideas of Kautsky on the same issues. Kautsky in his work *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (1918) wrote that:

Force can only be met with force. However a government which knows that the masses are behind it will only use force to protect democracy and not to suppress it. It would be quite suicidal to dispense with universal suffrage, which is a government's surest foundation and a powerful source of tremendous moral authority.<sup>2</sup>

In *The British Road to Socialism*, 1968 we read:

Only against illegal opposition would the force of the law be invoked; only in the case of violence against the socialist government would forceful measures be taken by the state and the people.<sup>3</sup>

The parliamentary road to socialism is related to all these questions. Parliament is not seen as in both classical Marxism and Leninism, as a legitimate façade for a

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<sup>1</sup>Vladimir I. Lenin, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky", *Selected Works*, (in One Volume), Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 466, emphasis in the original.

<sup>2</sup>*Die Diktatur des Proletariats* (Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, Wiener, 1918), the citation is taken from excerpts on *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* available in English in *Karl Kautsky: Selected Political Writings*, edited and translated by Patrick Goode, Macmillan, London, 1983, p. 117; see also, Rosa Luxemburg's intervention in the debate in her *Reform or Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1982.

<sup>3</sup>*The British Road to Socialism*, Programme of the Communist Party, The Communist Party of Great Britain, London, October, 1968, p. 51.



bourgeois dictatorship. The duality of dictatorial and democratic road equates socialism with "advanced" or "pure" democracy<sup>1</sup> which is the equivalent of socialism in Eurocommunist thought, and dictatorship of the proletariat with dictatorship of one class against the people in the literal sense.

The question of the dictatorship of the proletariat is one of the central elements of the classical Marxist theory and is related with the question of the democratic road to socialism, and that of democracy and dictatorship as forms of régimes. At this point it will be useful to summarise some of the most important theses of Marx's conceptualisation of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. Such a discussion becomes necessary for an understanding of the concept of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' since its different interpretations or even its rejection played a predominant role not only in classical Marxist theory and political practice but also in the understanding of the theoretical shifts in the Communist Party of Great Britain; shifts that can be better understood if compared with the classical Marxist positions.

Karl Marx, apart from his much quoted letter to Joseph Weydemeyer<sup>2</sup> in New York, (London, March 5, 1852) where he referred to this "little word", had already done it before and in fact he did it again on more than one occasion! Marx in "The Crisis and the Counter-Revolution" (1848) wrote that:

Every provisional political set-up following a revolution requires a dictatorship, and an energetic dictatorship at that. From the very beginning we blamed Camphausen for not having acted in a dictatorial manner, for not having immediately smashed up and removed the remains of the old institutions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Claudin Fernando, *Eurocommunism and Socialism*, New Left Books, London, 1978.

<sup>2</sup>Marx's letter to Weydemeyer was a comment to the latter's article on "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat", published in the New York *Turn-Zeitung* on January 1, 1852. See Hal Draper, "Joseph Weydemeyer's 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'", *Labour History*, 1962, vol. 3, part 2, pp. 208-217, for a comment and the complete translation of Weydemeyer's aforementioned article. For a discussion of the meaning of the concept/term of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" in Marx's thought see Hal Draper, "Marx and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", *New Politics*, vol. 1, part 4, Summer 1962, pp. 91-104 which is an abridged version of Draper's essay on the subject published in *Etudes de Marxologie*, vol. 6, pp. 5-73, Institute de Science Economique Appliquée, Paris 1962, edited by Maximilien Rubel.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx, "The Crisis and the Counter-Revolution", published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No 100, September 12, 1848, in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1977, p. 431.

Marx in his "The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution" (1848) referred to an historical example: the Jacobinist period of Terror during the French Revolution where:

The whole French terrorism was nothing but a plebeian manner of settling accounts with the enemies of the bourgeoisie, with absolutism, feudalism and philistinism.<sup>1</sup>

Marx in *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850* referred to the dictatorship of the proletariat as a *historical necessity*:

...-the proletariat rallies more and more round *revolutionary Socialism*, round *Communism*, for which the bourgeoisie has itself invented the name of *Blanqui*. This Socialism is *the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat* as the necessary transit point to *the abolition of class distinctions generally*, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionising of all the ideas that result from these social relations.<sup>2</sup>

For the first time in April 1850 the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" was printed in an official programme of the international working class movement. In the Article 1 of the Agreement for the foundation of the *Société Universelle des Communistes Révolutionnaires*, drafted by Blanquists and Left Chartists we read:

The aim of the association is the downfall of all privileged classes, their submission of those classes to the dictatorship of the proletarians by keeping the revolution in continual progress until the achievement of communism, which shall be the final form of the constitution of the human family...[(Signed:) J. Vidil, August Willich, G. Julian Harney, Adam, Ch. Marx, F. Engels].<sup>3</sup>

Marx analysed the term dictatorship as the use of class violence of the violence, of one class against another, as the real feature and the true essence of political power.

<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, "The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution", published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No 169, December 15, 1848, written in Cologne, December 11, 1848, in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1983, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850* in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1983, p. 282, emphasis in the original.

<sup>3</sup>Universal Society of Revolutionary Communists, Article 1 of the Agreement drawn up in mid-April 1850, in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1978, p. 614.

But after the 1848 revolution the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" took an additional meaning, that of a transitional type of workers' state which was identical with the first phase of communism namely: socialism. In the Marxian texts after 1848 *dictatorship* is always *linked with a class*, either with the "progressive"<sup>1</sup> class that fights for the conquest of political power or with the dictatorship of the reactionary class which fights for the survival of the old régime. Here we have a distinction between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary dictatorship and the break with bourgeois constitutional law which analyses democracy and dictatorship as different forms of government or régimes. The Marxist concept always has a class connotation and context. Marx in his Letter to Weydemeyer, March 5, 1852, wrote that "the class struggle necessarily leads to *the dictatorship of the proletariat*."<sup>2</sup> Marx in the same letter referred to the dictatorship of the proletariat as a *transitional phase*: "that this dictatorship itself constitutes no more than a transition to *the abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society* "<sup>3</sup>

This transitional phase was not to be a new form of government but a new type of state, a workers' state. In the *Civil War in France* the Paris Commune was analysed as a new type of state which had as its main tasks the withering of all the old institutions and their replacement with new revolutionary ones. The dictatorship of the proletariat was meant to safeguard the revolution, to make it *permanent*. Marx wrote in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875) that in the transitional phase between "capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."<sup>4</sup> Here Marx refers to the transition to "the first phase of communist society as it is when it has just emerged after prolonged birth pangs from capitalist society" i.e., the transition to socialism.<sup>5</sup> The dictatorship of the proletariat is defined as the revolutionary state of the transition period.

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<sup>1</sup>According to Marx the bourgeoisie was a progressive class in relation to the old régime up to the point of establishing its power as a dominant class; cf., Karl Marx: *Capital, The Civil War in France* and Marx/Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* and *The German Ideology*.

<sup>2</sup>Marx's "Letter to Weydemeyer in New York, March 5, 1852" in Marx/Engels/Lenin: *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1984, p. 67, emphasis in the original.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 67, emphasis in the original.

<sup>4</sup>See Karl Marx, "Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers' Party" [*Critique of the Gotha Programme*], in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>Karl Marx, "Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers' Party", op. cit., p. 19.



It is of a special interest in the contemporary theoretical debate on the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat Hal Draper's contribution.<sup>1</sup> According to Draper's interpretation the Marxian use of the concept was totally on the democratic-liberal side as opposed to the Leninist interpretation of a class dictatorship. Draper reached that conclusion by studying the instances that the terms "dictatorship of the proletariat" and "proletarian democracy" or any other combination of the two component ideas appeared in Marx's writings chronologically. He found out that the term "dictatorship of the proletariat" was used in only eleven *loci*

Draper's thesis reflect the need for a new approach from the Left to complex problems related to the issue of the necessity of a democratic element in the process of a socialist change and the prevention of a dictatorship *over* the proletariat. Marx and Engels themselves were opposed to the latter interpretation of the concept with its Blanquist conspiratorial derivations. Engels in his critique of the "programm der blanquistischen Kommuneflüchtlinge", (Programme of the Blanquist Commune

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<sup>1</sup>Cf., Hal Draper, op. cit.; See also, Richard N. Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels: Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy 1818-1850*, vol 1, Macmillan, London, 1975, ch. 9, pp. 284-336, for "the career of a slogan", namely the dictatorship of the proletariat. For further reading on the subject see also, Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, vol. I: State and Bureaucracy*, (Book I & Book II), Monthly Review Press, New York-London, 1977; Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, vol. II: The Politics of Social Classes*, Monthly Review Press, New York-London, 1978; É. Balibar, *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, New Left Books, London, 1977; É. Balibar, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat", *Marxism Today*, May 1977; R. N. Carew Hunt, *Marxism Past and Present*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1954, esp. pp.138-164; C. D. Kernig (ed), *Marxism, Communism and Western Society: A Comparative Encyclopedia*, vol. II, Herder and Herder, New York, 1972, pp. 420-438; For a favourable discussion of the "classical Marxist" approach see G. Fechner and U. Huar, *Marx und Engels über Politik*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1985; Marx/Engels/Lenin: *On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1984; Marx/Engels/Lenin: *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972. For a substantial discussion on the pros and cons of the implications of the concept of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" in the classical Marxist theory and in political practice see John Hoffman, *Marxism and the Theory of Praxis*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1975; John Hoffman, *State Power and Democracy*, Wheatsheaf Books, Sussex, 1988; John Hoffman, "Liberals versus Socialists: Who are the True Democrats?" in D. McLellan and S. Sayers (eds) *Socialism and Democracy*, Macmillan, London, 1991 and especially his most recent contribution to the aforementioned subject in his paper entitled "The Tension between Democracy as a Form of the State and Democracy as Self-Government in Marxist Political Theory", unpublished paper, presented at the 1991 Annual Conference of the Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom held in Lancaster, as Hoffman's contribution as a member of the Marxism Specialist Group of the PSA; (see also my contribution to the aforementioned PSA Conference, at the same Marxism Specialist Group panel with a paper entitled "Democracy and Socialism in Classical Marxism", unpublished paper, PSA Annual Conference, Lancaster University, Lancaster, April 1991).

Emigrants), published in the newspaper *Der Volksstaat*, no 73, June 26, 1874, wrote that:

Since Blanqui regards every revolution as a *coup de main* of a small revolutionary minority, it automatically follows that its success must inevitably followed by the establishment of a dictatorship -not, it should be well noted, of the entire revolutionary class, the proletariat, [in the German text: *der Diktatur, wohlverstanden, nicht der ganzen revolutionären Klasse, des Proletariats.* -F. D.] but of the small number of those who accomplished the insurrection and who themselves are at first organised under the dictatorship of one or several persons. Obviously, Blanqui is a revolutionary of the old generation.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the undisputable value of interpretations such as Draper's of the classical Marxist theory, the question remains to what extent those new formulations represent an "authentic" explanation of the above discussed classical Marxist positions or do they represent a move away from those and the formulation of a new theory?

The "revisionist" understanding of democracy discussed above refers to an abstract notion of the individual as a member of the "people". It does not seem to take into consideration the classical Marxist interpretation of the meaning of the term "people", i. e. that there is not such thing as a homogeneous entity as "the people" in class divided societies- and also on the point of democracy and dictatorship that both manifestations are always painted with class colours.

This leads on to the "old-revisionist" understanding of class which relies heavily on Weber's analysis of status groups. *Status* is seen as a social relation as opposed to *class* which is seen as based on economic relations only. In Weber's words:

In our terminology, "classes" are not communities; they merely represent possible, and frequent, bases for communal action. We may speak of a "class" when 1) a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances, in so far as 2) this component is *represented exclusively by economic interests* in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, and 3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labor markets. [These points refer to "class situation", which we may express more briefly as the typical chance for a supply of goods, external living conditions, and personal life experiences, in so far as this chance is determined by the amount and kind of power, or lack of such, to dispose of goods or skills for the sake of income in a given economic

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Engels, "Programme of the Blanquist Commune Emigrants", (Article II from: "*Flüchtlingsliteratur*"), in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 2, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1977, p. 381, and also in Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Band 18, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1964, p. 529.



order. *The term "class" refers to any group of people that is found in the same class situation.*] <sup>1</sup>

And Weber's understanding of status:

In contrast to classes, *status groups* are normally communities. They are, however, often of an amorphous kind. In contrast to the purely economically determined "class situation" we wish to designate as "status situation" every typical component of the life fate of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honor.<sup>2</sup>

And also:

Whereas the genuine place of "classes" is within the economic order, the place of "status groups" is within the social order, that is, within the sphere of the distribution of "honor".<sup>3</sup>

In classical Marxism the analysis of class brings in the fundamental antagonism between exploiters and exploited which is based on the ownership of the means of production. The formation of classes in capitalist society is based on the capital-labour antagonism.

We have seen that the capitalist process of production is a *historically determined* form of the social process of production in general. The latter is as much a production process of material conditions of human life as a process taking place under specific historical and economical production relations, producing and reproducing these production relations themselves and thereby also the bearers of the process, their material conditions of existence and their mutual relations, i. e., their *particular socio-economic form*. For the aggregate of these relations, in which the agents of the production stand with respect to Nature and to one another, and in which they produce, is precisely *society*, considered from the standpoint of its *economic structure*. Like all its predecessors, the capitalist process of production proceeds under definite material conditions, which are, however, simultaneously, the bearers of definite social relations, entered into by individuals in the process of reproducing their life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, translated, and edited with an Introduction by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London - Boston, 1985, p. 181, emphasis added, also quoted in Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset, *Class, Status and Power: Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, (1953) 2nd ed. 1967, p. 21, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>Max Weber, *ibid.*, p. 187, and in *Class, Status...*, op. cit., p. 24, emphasis in the original.

<sup>3</sup>Max Weber, *ibid.*, p. 192, and in *Class, Status...*, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, op. cit., pp. 818-19, emphasis added.

According to classical Marxism "class" is defined objectively and subjectively. The objective definition is the *class in itself* (*an sich*); the relation -of its members- to the means of production, that is ownership and control over them or the absence of it. A class becomes a *class for itself* (*für sich*) when its members realise their different mode of existence and get organised. As Marx put it:

The separate individuals form a class in so far as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors. On the other hand, the class in its turn achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class, become subsumed under it. This is the same phenomenon as the subjection of the separate individuals to the division of labour and can only be removed by the abolition of private property and of labour itself...<sup>1</sup>

In order for the class to be organised, first of all it should have a community of interests, a national association and a political organisation. Marx stresses the importance of these elements in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, with reference to the peasantry.

...that is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes. In so far as millions of families live under *economic conditions of existence* that *separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture* from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, *they form a class*. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants and the identity of their interests begets *no community, no national bond and no political organisation among them, they do not form a class*. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interests in their own name, whether through a parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented...<sup>2</sup>

*Classes* are the outcome of *the division of labour* and the rise of different *material interests* associated with the *collective form of material existence of individual producers*. *Property relations* are the result of alienated forms of labour and not the constituting essence of them. If this proposition is correct then the

<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1965, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1962, p. 235, emphasis added.

primacy for the constitution of classes *für sich* (subjectively) are not only property relations and the ownership of the means of production but the division of labour between producers which enable some of them under certain historical circumstances to control the means of existence for their own sake and appropriate the surplus (cf., religious sects, absolute monarch, victorious warriors, etc.)

Hence, *subjectively*, classes are not only constituted according to their members' relation to the means of production but also according to their position in the division of labour. This position carries with it not only the integration of their objective class situation but also their subjective subordination/desubordination to the whole spectrum of material and ideological relations.

Class is the subjective and objective form of the dialectical constitution of real interests and the fundamental mean of bringing together individuals is to address them in class terms as class representatives having a common cause to fight based on their common interests arising from the organisation of society into antagonistic class forces.

Class constitutes its members, and is constituted in the class struggle. Certainly there are not pre-given entities entering into struggle but on the contrary class members occupying different places in the social division of labour and different positions in the technical division of labour. Class members come, through the process of class struggle, to the realisation of their particular interests and through that to their particular class existence.<sup>1</sup> Class struggle, here, is not a vague term used whenever one is out of concrete concepts of analysis. Class struggle is the fight over the rate of exploitation which is manifested in struggles over wages, over working conditions, over the false separation of the personal from the political, over myriads of issues challenging the dominant mode of production. Class struggle is not one-sided, it is always twofold. When the one hostile camp demands something the other responds. This means that class struggle cannot have pre-given forms prescribed to it for fighting the class antagonism out. Because it is live it is in a constant change, in this sense there are no good and bad fights, outdated and modern ones, but only successful and unsuccessful ones depending not on the amount of gains but on the amount of losses, depending not on the extent to which the system is changing but on the extent to which the system is forced to change.

If the above propositions are correct then classes are not groups of individuals who occupy a certain place in the work hierarchy according to their wage but class individuals who are constituted as such according to their material interests and

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<sup>1</sup>K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1965, pp. 68-69.

economic position in relation to capital. That is, the working class is not only the manual workforce *par excellence* i. e. a group defined in terms of its occupation. According to classical Marxism the proletariat was the class of society which has as its only private property its labour power to sell in order to keep going as a class in the most literal (material) sense. The working class is the class of people who are being exploited in the form of the extraction of surplus value which is used for the subsistence and reproduction of the capitalist class and more importantly for the reproduction of the relations of production as capitalist relations of production. Even if one accepts that capitalism has changed quantitatively it has not changed qualitatively, that is, the realisation of higher living standards and material wealth for the working class does not change its position in the production process and in the whole sphere of the reproduction of its material and mental existence, thus the reproduction of the antagonistic relations of production.

The Labour old-revisionist view on class with its anti-Marxist stand was comprehensively expressed by Crosland:

But suppose that class is not objectively, determined at all?...people belong to the class which they think they belong to, or are thought to belong to. Class is simply what people say it is: and the final criteria are the subjective evaluations and self-placements of the society itself, expressed in such phrases as 'they belong to our set', 'they don't fit in with our crowd'...But all that appears to be meant by the 'subjective' view is that people belong to a class if they say or think they do *and are recognised by others as so doing*.<sup>1</sup>

The Eurocommunists believe that the concept of class is becoming more and more irrelevant in itself since capitalism was successful in overcoming its crisis and the working class is diminishing by upward mobility. Their emphasis is placed on the new social movements which came into the political spectrum demanding to fill the political vacuum left by the declining working class revolutionary subjectivity<sup>2</sup>, so they seek to build a broad anti-monopoly democratic alliance with the latter and sections of the bourgeoisie whose interests are anti-monopolist. In their view the democratic defeat of the political and economic power of monopoly capital by the majority of the population, under the hegemony (not the leadership) of the working class, would still not constitute the beginning of socialism, but only of a long phase of transition to socialism- what the Communist Party of France (PCF) refers to as

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<sup>1</sup>C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, op. cit., pp. 183-184, emphasis in the original

<sup>2</sup>See André Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay in Post-industrial Socialism*, Pluto Press, London, 1982.



"advanced democracy", the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) as "a new stage in the democratic revolution" and the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) as "political and social democracy".<sup>1</sup> This "transition to the transition" is the important element in the democratic road to socialism and a move away from the classical Marxist analysis which considers the transitional period between capitalism and communism as socialism and which is initiated when the working class and its allies win power and take the first steps towards the appropriation of the means of production and the smashing of the state machine.<sup>2</sup>

And this brings in the fore *the relation between class and the advance to socialism*. According to the Eurocommunist theory, capital is antagonistic not only to the working class but also to all non-monopoly fractions of the bourgeoisie although in this sense they open themselves to criticism from a classical Marxist viewpoint in relation to the extent that in order for the monopoly capital to survive the latter it has the need of co-operation with smaller capital at the same time as it seeks to absorb it. The modern capitalist state might be the state of the big monopolies but at the same time, it is the state of capital in general. This relative autonomy of the state from classes in struggle makes it possible to serve as a collective capitalist which supersedes particular capitals in order to serve capital in general. An anti-monopoly alliance can be successful only to the extent that the working class and its allies have a clear anti-capitalist and not only anti-monopolist aim. The way the Eurocommunists see the working class is as acting against the enemies of the *nation*, not against any class enemies it might itself have. British capitalism in particular was not to be blamed as much as the multinational companies, moving around the globe without any concern for national sovereignty.

The concept of the broad democratic alliance can be potentially catastrophic for socialist advance. The decisive element is "*democratism*". According to classical Marxism if democracy is carried to its limits, then by the time it reaches its highest form it ceases to be necessary, because it already becomes a reality in the communist era. If democracy is simply extended then the end of the road is an "advanced democracy", but not socialism. If pluralism becomes a decisive category not only in the alliance but also in the transition, with the preservation of all political parties including those hostile to socialism, then the class struggle will continue since there

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<sup>1</sup>See Claudin Fernando, *Eurocommunism and Socialism*, New Left Books, London, 1978; Richard Kindersley (ed), *In Search of Eurocommunism*, Macmillan in association with St Anthony's College Oxford, London, 1981; Ernest Mandel, *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism*, New Left Books, London, 1978.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983, p. 26.



will be no suppression of the bourgeoisie and its rights, which rights have been formed by this class to serve its long run interests. The classical Marxist conception of rights does not exclude the working class struggle to gain rights in the system but stresses that these rights and privileges can contribute to the integration of the working class into the capitalist system. The broad democratic alliance consists of differential interests with one common purpose, the defeat of monopoly capitalism and its malfunctions, and could lead to a "healthier" capitalism; it can only lead to socialism if the partners of the alliance believe in it. The Eurocommunists, although they use the term, tend to overlook its meaning, that socialism's final goal is not primarily concerned with the issue of the extension of the manifestations of an unequal society in the legal sphere, i.e. rights, but with human emancipation. If the institutions of alienation are kept intact (the state machine) and their transformation is merely demanded without addressing the issue of their "withering away", then an "administration of things" runs the risk of never be substantiated and "the government of the people"<sup>1</sup> will turn up to reproduce itself in *eternam*. The "transition to the transition" seems to be based on democratism, that is, extension of bourgeois rights nor to any notion of a "dictatorial" revolutionary democracy of the working class.

The cornerstone of the classical Marxist theory is the theory of labour, the theory of exploitation which is based on the concept of surplus value; in the Eurocommunist analysis this has been replaced by the neo-Ricardian theory of value, while Marx's analysis of capitalist crisis as a result of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall has been modified. Marx's analysis of the mode of production, of the conflict between the forces of production and the relations of production as the motor force of change has been replaced by the stress on the superstructure of the capitalist system, with the emphasis on culture and ideology rather than the socio-economic dynamics of the capitalist accumulation process. Characteristically Eurocommunists refer to Gramsci and especially to those parts of Gramsci's work that put stress on questions of ideology and culture. Gramsci is seen as the prime critic of economism in the communist movement. Economism, according to the Eurocommunist understanding, reduces class and non class relations to the economic base. Eurocommunism's selective reading of Gramsci provided it with a respectable substitution for Lenin's view of the Party, the role of the working class, and the transitional phase and also with a critique of the Leninist theory *per se*, not only of the way it has been applied to

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<sup>1</sup>Cf, Engels famous phrase in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*: "the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not "abolished". It *dies out*..", Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, p. 74.

the socialist countries. All these points raised above will be developed later in this thesis.

Further theoretical problems are raised in relation to the Eurocommunist understanding of socialism as democratism and decentralisation. Local government is certainly an important factor in promoting socialism in the localities. Central planning cannot be simply dismissed as bureaucratic and authoritarian. A decentralised state can be as dictatorial as a centralised one and a centralised one can be as democratic as any other form. The issue is who is taking the decisions and how. Marx's view on the subject of decentralisation is well expressed in his analysis of the 1871 Paris Commune.

In a brief sketch of national organisation which the Commune had no time to develop, it states explicitly that the Commune was to be the political form of even the smallest village...The communes were to elect the "National Delegation" in Paris...The few but important functions which would still remain for a central government were not to be suppressed as has been deliberately mis-stated, but were to be transferred to communal, i.e., strictly responsible, officials...National unity was not to be broken, but on the contrary, organised by the communal constitution; it was to become a reality by the destruction of state power which posed as the embodiment of that unity yet wanted to be independent of, and superior to, the nation, on whose body it was but a parasitic excrescence. While the merely repressive organs of the older government power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority claiming the right to stand above society, and restored to the responsible servants of society.<sup>1</sup>

According to the classical Marxist theory decentralisation is already a reality in capitalism. The division of labour within the state apparatus makes possible the better function of the state machine. Socialist centralism on the contrary is necessary in order to bring together under a central authority the responsibility of carrying socialist planning and decisions forward. The form it will take might be based on decentralisation that is by giving the power to local authorities and socialist organisations to decide and carry out socialist programmes based on a national socialist plan of advance.

These are some comments on the Revisionist and Eurocommunist understanding of the classical Marxist categories. The Eurocommunist ideas were the result of "rearrangements" in the social structure and their understanding of these recompositions. The so-called technological revolution after the Second World War

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, p. 55, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977.

had a significant impact on Left theory and practice and supported the classical Marxist thesis, that changes in the forces of production are decisive for changes in the relations of production and the mode of existence.<sup>1</sup>

Marx in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* insists that capitalism is producing its own negation in the form of the working class. The Eurocommunists and "revisionists" alike tend to interpret the process of technological developments as being to the advantage of capitalism and also as shaping the whole societal spectrum without bringing into the frame the role of the other side of the capital relation that is: labour.

### III. 2. THE NEW LEFT AND ITS CRITIQUE OF LABOURISM

A very important self-proclaimed "movement of ideas" which criticised Labourism and proposed an alternative to it; a movement that was also 'destined' to play an influential role both in shaping the politics of the Communist Party of Great Britain in the 1970s and influencing the discussions on the British Left from the 1960s up to this era is the so-called "New Left". The theoretical intervention of New Left in the 1960s and 1970s, predominantly *via* the journals *New Left Review* and *Socialist Register*, will be discussed in this section. But first a brief note on the British New Left's background whose story is indeed, a long one!<sup>2</sup>

The Fifties were also the decade which marked with the beginning of the de-Stalinisation process, a process that affected the Communist Parties world-wide, the Communist Party of Great Britain being no exception.

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<sup>1</sup>See Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, op. cit., pp. 85-90; see also Karl Marx, *Preface (to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy)*, Appendix in *Early Writings*, op. cit., p. 425.

<sup>2</sup>See Perry Anderson, "The Left in the Fifties", *New Left Review*, no 29, 1965; Ian Birchall, "The Autonomy of Theory: A Short History of *New Left Review*", *International Socialism*, Winter 1980/1981; David Widgery, *The Left in Britain, 1956-1968*, Peregrine Books, Harmondsworth, 1976; a critique of Widgery's book in Ken Coates, "How Not To Reappraise the New Left", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1976; Robin Blackburn, "Raymond Williams and the Politics of a New Left", *New Left Review*, no 168, 1988; for a study of British intellectual culture in post-war Britain to which development the *New Left* contributed a significant amount, see Perry Anderson: "A Culture in Contraflow - I", *New Left Review*, no 180, 1990 and "A Culture in Contraflow - II", *New Left Review*, no 182, 1990; for a reevaluation of the early New Left, see *Out of Apathy, Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On*, edited by the Oxford University Socialist Discussion Group, Verso, London, 1989; for a critique of the "newer" New Left's ideas, see E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, Merlin Press, London, 1978; for a counter-critique of Thompson's comments see Perry Anderson, *Arguments Within English Marxism*, New Left Books & Verso, London, 1980.

1956 was the starting point of the break-up of the 'orthodox' Marxist British Left. The events in Hungary caused the exodus of a considerable number of members from the Communist Party of Great Britain -the latter gave its official support to the Soviet invasion. 1956 was also the year of the joint Anglo-French attack on Suez, and the Labour Party's initial support of it revealed to many that the post-war social democratic consensus politics in the sphere of international affairs was no more than a new era of imperialism.<sup>1</sup> Social democracy, British style, and Communism in its Stalinist version were equally unsatisfactory régimes for this part of the Left in Britain who believed in what was later to be named: *socialist-humanism*.<sup>2</sup> What the New Left wanted to occupy was a "third" space between social democracy and Stalinism.<sup>3</sup> *Universities and Left Review* and the *New Reasoner* became the fora of this "movement of ideas".<sup>4</sup> The New Left believed that ideas shape political realities, culture shapes politics, people were moral beings capable of determining their own individuality and taking their own free moral choices away from the technocratic and bureaucratic lines of the welfare state. They also believed that socialism could be achieved "here and now" through the exercise of fundamental human values and ideas

<sup>1</sup>Initially Gaitskell stood firmly behind the government but by the time United Nations resolutions were defied by the government taking military action against Nasser, he led the Labour Party into opposition, see G. Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought*, op. cit., p. 225; T. Cliff and D. Gluckstein, *The Labour Party: A Marxist History*, Bookmarks, London, 1988.

<sup>2</sup>The politics of "socialist - humanism" were advocated from both the *Universities and Left Review* and *The New Reasoner's* contributors especially from E. P. Thompson (see cf. Thompson's essay on "Socialist Humanism", *The New Reasoner*, Summer 1957, pp. 105ff and the same author's "Socialism and the Intellectuals", *Universities and Left Review*, no 1, Spring 1957; Charles Taylor, "Alienation and Community", *Universities and Left Review*, no 5, Autumn 1958 and the same author's pamphlet *Is Marxism a Humanism?*). Socialist-humanism placed the emphasis on subjects rather than structures and mean to serve as a critique of 'orthodox' Marxism -read Stalinism. For a discussion of the pros and cons of the concept of "socialist humanism" see Erich Fromm (ed), *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, Penguin, London, 1967. Louis Althusser criticised this strand of Marxism in his theory of "theoretical anti-humanism", see Louis Althusser, *Theses*, Themelio, Athens, 1983 ; Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, Penguin, London, 1969.

<sup>3</sup>E. P. Thompson coined the word 'Natopolis' to describe the western capitalist politics of NATO that is the organisation of the world under US leadership which was thought to be -according to Thompson- the breeding ground of a 'Natopolitan' ideology of apathy about politics on the one hand and with its perversion of freedom on the other, see E. P. Thompson (ed), *Out of Apathy*, NLB and Steven & Sons Ltd, London, 1960; Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought*, op. cit., p. 288; Labedz, L. (ed) *Revisionism: Essays on the History of Marxist Ideas*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1962, especially G. L. Arnold's essay on "Britain: The New Reasoners", pp. 299-312.

<sup>4</sup>See Stuart Hall, "The 'First' New Left: Life and Times", in *Out of Apathy, Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On*, edited by the Oxford University Socialist Discussion Group, Verso, London, 1989, p. 31.



in the sphere of politics. If there was any light at the end of the tunnel that was to be found in the centrality of *utopian thinking* as opposed to *scientific socialism*. In order to move *Out of Apathy*<sup>1</sup> which had been produced by the social democratic politics of "expediency" and instrumental "needs", people -the New Left argued- should be given a new vision of society which would inspire widespread support and confront the ideology of "affluence". Intellectuals were to play the vital role in shaping this new image and that was what the New Left tried to achieve. As Edward P. Thompson explained in *Universities and Left Review*:

the value of utopianism is to be found, not in raising banners in the wilderness but in confronting living people with an image of their own potential life, in summoning up their aspirations so that they challenge the old forms of life and in influencing such social choices as there are in the direction that is desired.<sup>2</sup>

The New Left drew their intellectual force from the British socialist tradition. William Morris was their favourite theorist. Karl Marx's writings were selectively read and, as they wanted to place emphasis on humanism and culture rather than politics and economics, they expressed their preference for Marx's early writings where Marx was dealing with questions such as alienation and naturalism. Cultural politics were predominant in their thought almost to the exclusion of economics and politics as belonging to the practical political realm and not appropriate for a "movement of ideas" as they wanted theirs to be.

The New Left was by no means a homogeneous group. Socialist humanists, social democrats, humanitarians, pacifists, communists were united in one idea only: the rejection of official party politics and the faith in changing the world "here and now". Equally important was the social background and the age group of their editorial boards and of the members of these influential journals, namely: *Universities and Left Review* and *The New Reasoner*<sup>3</sup> The New Left originated among Oxbridge young

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<sup>1</sup>*Out of Apathy*, was a collection of essays edited by E. P. Thompson (NLB and Steven & Sons Ltd, London, 1960), having as their main theme a critique of political "absenteeism", that is the apathetic response of the British people to political affairs. Among other people who contributed to this volume was Stuart Hall with an essay entitled "The Supply of Demand". For a reevaluation of the ideas expressed in that period from the *New Left*, see *Out of Apathy, Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On*, edited by the Oxford University Socialist Discussion Group, Verso, London, 1989.

<sup>2</sup>Edward P. Thompson in *Universities and Left Review*, no 6, Summer 1959.

<sup>3</sup>*The New Reasoner* was first published in July 1956 under the name of *The Reasoner* by a group of Communist Party dissidents under E. P. Thompson and John Saville's editorship and it was aimed as an internal discussion journal. *The Reasoner* criticised Stalinism through the critique of "democratic centralism". After the events in



students and intellectuals coming from a middle class background. It was not an accident that a group of young 'hip'<sup>1</sup> intellectuals such as this attached a great significance to age.<sup>2</sup> Old politics were wrong predominantly because they had been carried out by aging politicians branded with their ideas of the old epoch not appropriate for the then "New Times", the politics of modernism. Time was the key issue then as it is now in this current of Left thought. New Times were in need of people young enough to capture the new meaning and rebel -even without a cause- against the predominant old values and their carriers. James Dean's type reaction to an aging American society became the most famous stereotype of a "Rebel Without a Cause" which symbolized the rebellion of the 1950s youth against the predominant middle class American values. *Room at the Top* was one of the characteristic British equivalents, as well as such plays as Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*,<sup>3</sup> *sine qua non* examples of a predominantly middle class old Albion's youth rebellion.

The editorial boards of both *The New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review* decided in late 1959 to merge; the outcome of this move was the journal *New Left Review*<sup>4</sup> that was destined to play an important role in the introduction to the British Isles of influential debates going on in Continental Europe, especially after the take over bid of the *New Left Review*'s editorial board by Perry Anderson. The "newer"

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Hungary in 1956 the editorial asked the Communist Party to demonstrate its disapproval of the invasion; this issue (no 3) was the last one. *The Reasoner* was not very welcome in the Party apparatus and it was seen -as it really was- not only as a critical voice but one that was threatening the very essence of the party structure: democratic centralism. For an evaluation of the New Left's contribution to the 'revisionism' thinking/debate in Britain, see G. L. Arnold, "Britain: The New Reasoners", in L. Labedz, *Revisionism: Essays on the History of Marxist Ideas*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1962, pp. 299-312.

<sup>1</sup>See, Ralph Samuel, "Born-again Socialism" in *Out of Apathy, Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On*, edited by the Oxford University Socialist Discussion Group, Verso, London, 1989, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>The average age of the members of the *Universities and Left Review*'s editorial board was twenty five. Stuart Hall, who had also edited the first twelve issues of the *New Left Review*, was only twenty five years old when he became a member of the *Universities and Left Review* editorial board, in Spring 1957.

<sup>3</sup>See John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger*, Faber and Faber, London, 1957.

<sup>4</sup>Symbolically, the editorship of the combined journal was entrusted, by mutual consent, to the former editor of the *Universities and Left Review*, namely Stuart Hall, whose West Indian background, social origins, and quasi-Troskyist pre-1956 affiliations, seemed to mark him out as the embodiment of all those tendencies - anti-colonial, intellectual, neo-Marxist - which the New Left might be supposed to incarnate. See G. L. Arnold, "Britain: The New Reasoners", in L. Labedz, *Revisionism: Essays on the History of Marxist Ideas*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1962, pp. 299-312.

*New Left Review* editorial was more Eurocentrist,<sup>1</sup> in contrast to the old one which favoured Britishness.

We have chosen to discuss only those aspects of the New Left's theoretical intervention that are relevant to our research, namely: the critique of Labourism, and their understanding of structuralism and neo-Gramscianism in so far as their application to political analysis was concerned.

For the purpose of our discussion the *Socialist Register* and the *New Left Review* have been chosen as a point of reference because both journals argued that the common kind of explanation of the Labour Party's declining appeal, that socialism had become an anachronism superseded by affluence and consensus embodied in the Keynesian Welfare State, that socialism could no longer make an appeal to the manual working class simply because the latter has ceased to exist, and finally that socialism was an obstacle to the process of modernization and moderation of the party, was not correct and that other factors should have been taken into consideration.

"The Sickness of Labourism" (1960) was the title of an essay published in the *New Left Review* and written by Ralph Miliband. Miliband stressed that:

...a proper diagnosis must take electoral defeat into account but only as one element of Labour's condition.<sup>2</sup>

Miliband discussed the weakness of the Labour Party in terms of its inadequacy to advance the struggle for socialism. The same essay was reprinted in his book *Parliamentary Socialism in Britain* (1973). Miliband in this essay periodized the Labour Party's performance from its loss of office in 1951 up to the third electoral defeat of 1959. The process of what Miliband named "paralysis as ideology"<sup>3</sup> was a "re-thinking" exercise which, according to him, involved :

...a great deal of "re-thinking" particularly in relation to common ownership: the result of the exercise might be to provide the Labour

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<sup>1</sup>See Perry Anderson, "The Left in the Fifties", *New Left Review*, no 29, 1965; Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, New Left Books, London, 1976; E. P. Thompson's critique of this new approach in *The Poverty of Theory*, Merlin Press, London, 1978 and Perry Anderson's reply in *Arguments Within English Marxism*, New Left Books, London, 1980; for an evaluation of the "old" and the "new" *New Left* see Peter Sedwick, "The Two New Lefts", *International Socialism*, Part 17, Summer 1964.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Miliband, "The Sickness of Labourism", *New Left Review*, no 1, 1960, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism in Britain*, Merlin Press, London, 1973, p. 331.

Party with new policies, but the policies would reflect a further dilution of the Party's aims.<sup>1</sup>

According to Miliband the background started with the publication in 1957 of *Industry and Society* which made clear what the "re-thinking" was all about. Steel and long-distance road haulage would be re-nationalized but the next Labour government reserved:

the right to extend public ownership in any industry or part of industry which, after thorough enquiry, is found to be seriously failing the nation.<sup>2</sup>

The document also stated that "the community should acquire a stake in the expansion of industry through the acquisition of shares by the State" but this could only happen "solely by investment considerations and will not be aimed at securing control".<sup>3</sup>

In terms of electoral appeal the Labour Party's revisionist belief was that the potential Labour voter was a *petit-bourgeois*, and therefore likely to turn his/her back on an *anti-status quo* party. Hugh Gaitskell, the then Labour Party leader, had described those potential Labour voters as: "*ordinary decent people who do not probably think a great deal about politics*".<sup>4</sup> Clause IV and the class character of the Labour Party had to be blamed for the 1959 electoral defeat. Hugh Gaitskell at the Labour Party Conference of November 1959 on the one hand rejected the notion that the Labour Party should break with the trade unions, but on the other complained that, even though the Labour Party was "a far better cross-section of the community than the Tories who are still overwhelmingly drawn from a single social class", yet "somehow we let the Tories get away with the monstrous falsehood that *we* are a Class party and they are *not*. We must surely attend to this."<sup>5</sup>

This call for a "*classless*" appeal meant to meet the demands of a changing society, one which had become "affluent" after the war through welfare policies. The rejection of class - before the cock thrice crows - has the stamp of the Fabian version of administrative socialism in its preoccupation with gaining governmental power. Transformation of society is secondary, the important thing is to have a better manager

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>2</sup>See *Industry and Society: Labour's Policy on Future Public Ownership*, The Labour Party, London, 1957, p. 57, also quoted in Miliband, op. cit., p. 333.

<sup>3</sup>R. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism in Britain*, op. cit., p. 333.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in R. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism in Britain*, op. cit., p. 339.

<sup>5</sup>*Labour Party Annual Conference Report*, 1959, The Labour Party, London, p. 109.

of the capitalist state and not necessarily for the sake of working class interests but for the sake of "class harmony", as opposed to classical Marxist understandings of "class divisions" and "class war".

Miliband attributed the "*Sickness of Labourism*" to the revisionist ideology of the leadership and his call was for a *new political formation* because, according to him, the Labour Party was unable to offer a real alternative to Conservatism because:

...the alternative to its (Labour Party) becoming such a party is the kind of slow but sure decline which deservedly - affects parties that have ceased to serve any distinctive political purpose.<sup>1</sup>

The critique of Labourism is taken further by John Saville in an article in the *Socialist Register* in 1967. Saville set out to criticise "Labourism and the Labour Government", and its belief in:

...the State's neutrality: that any administration which takes power *ipso facto* is in full and complete control of its legislative programme.<sup>2</sup>

He concludes:

...that Labourism has nothing to do with Socialism; that the Labour Party has never been, nor is capable of becoming a vehicle for socialist advance; and that the destruction of the illusions of Labourism is a necessary step before the emergence of a socialist movement of any size and influence become practicable.<sup>3</sup>

This argument was further developed by Ralph Miliband in the 1976 *Socialist Register* in his essay "Moving On" where he asked for a "new social formation" to play the role for a socialist transformation of the British society, a role that was impossible both for the Communist Party and the Labour Party:

the belief in the effective transformation of the Labour party into an instrument of socialist policies is the most crippling of all illusions to which socialism in Britain have been prone.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism in Britain*, op. cit., p. 349.

<sup>2</sup>John Saville, "Labourism and the Labour Government", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1967, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Ralph Miliband, "Moving On", *Socialist Register*, 1976, p. 129, see also the Postscript in the second edition of *Parliamentary Socialism in Britain*, Merlin Press, London, 1972.



According to Miliband the Communist Party of Great Britain was incapable of playing the role of the "new formation" because of its ideological foundations on the one hand and its "affiliation" policies towards the Labour Party on the other.

The Communist Party Programme [*The British Road to Socialism*, 1968 --F. D.] notes, "It is not the aim of the Communist Party to undermine, weaken or split the Labour Party" and Gordon McLennan the General Secretary of the Communist Party told the 1975 Congress, that: "Our strategy, is for the return of a Labour Government committed by the pressure of the mass movement to left policies."<sup>1</sup>

Further on, Miliband in an essay entitled "The Future of Socialism in England" published in *The Socialist Register* 1977 provided us with some hints of what socialism should be about.

The three themes which are bound to dominate socialism in England are firstly what may be called democratism; secondly egalitarianism; and thirdly efficiency;<sup>2</sup>

"Democratism" was understood as:

a concrete libertarianism...That representation should be answerable and responsive, on the basis of a free, fair and equal suffrage...the defence and extension of civic freedoms, and against executive arbitrariness and police powers.<sup>3</sup>

"Efficiency" meant:

the capacity of the social system as a whole to provide, at the least possible individual and collective cost, the best conditions in which all those who live in that system may satisfy their needs and develop their faculties.<sup>4</sup>

And "Egalitarianism":

...something different from equality, or at least from absolute equality...Egalitarianism here means the achievement of a rough equality, a leveling out of gross inequalities, in income, property, opportunities, status and condition. I think it comes close to what

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Miliband, "Moving On", op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Miliband, "The Future of Socialism in England", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1977, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 39.



Marx meant when he spoke of a classless society, and what has in England been understood as the socialist commonwealth and society as fellowship. Fellowship is altogether incompatible with large-scale inequalities;...<sup>1</sup>

These demands, according to Miliband, could only be implemented by a new political formation, a reinstatement of his previous arguments, also expressed in his "Moving On".

A critique of this line of argument came from Ken Coates in the 1973 *Socialist Register* in his essay "Socialists and the Labour Party":

If the Labour Party cannot be turned into a socialist party, then the question which confronts us all is, how can we form a socialist party? If we are not ready to answer this question, then we are not ready to dismiss the party that exists.<sup>2</sup>

According to Coates the Labour Party was a platform for socialists working within it. There was no alternative agency capable of maintaining a full scale political presence outside the Labour Party, on the one hand, when on the other, there was the importance of parliamentary activity and the hope of changing the Party through the radicalization of the Unions in the late 1960s and 1970s. The white paper *In Place of Strife* (1969) had been defeated apparently because of the trade unions' resistance to it.

A different interpretation to the latter issue was provided by Leo Panitch<sup>3</sup> in his essay on "Socialists and the Labour Party: a Reappraisal" in the 1979 *Socialist Register*:

The Solemn and Binding Agreement between the TUC and the Government, which resolved the immediate controversy over *In Place of Strife*, may be seen from one perspective as a sterling victory by the labour movement over a Labour Government. But from another perspective, the long and abrasive negotiations between Wilson, Barbara Castle and the General Council was not only about avoiding

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 42-43.

<sup>2</sup>Ken Coates, "Socialists and the Labour Party", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1973, p. 155.

<sup>3</sup>See also, Leo Panitch, *Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy: the Labour Party, the Trade-Unions and Incomes Policy, 1945-1974*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976; Leo Panitch, *Working Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labour and the State*, Verso, London, 1986; Leo Panitch, "The Impasse of Social Democratic Politics", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1985/6.

the proposed legislation, but about avoiding an actual "civil war" in the Party.<sup>1</sup>

Panitch, contrary to Coates, believed that the trade unions were not strong enough to channel a government to socialism:

The resurgence of economic militancy in the winter of 1978-9 certainly reflects the resilience of the working class and its continuing ability to impose severe barriers to the strategic options of capital and the state. But in terms of the question of changing the Labour Party, there is little comfort to be drawn from it. It most certainly does not conform to Coates' scenario of an irreconcilable split between the vast proportion of the labour movement and the Labour leadership.<sup>2</sup>

So, Leo Panitch asked the question : "What then is the alternative for Socialists?"<sup>3</sup> and the answer given:

a *mass socialist party*, with different leaders, a different ethos and with a positive attitude to Marxism.<sup>4</sup>

The common feature of the bulk of the above mentioned explanations is the belief in the non-transformation of the Labour Party from a Labourist to a socialist party due to its inherent nature, that is its ideology of gradualism.

Another wave of constructive criticism came from most of the *New Left Review's* commentators. Perry Anderson in his "Critique of Wilsonism"<sup>5</sup> and especially in his highly celebrated "Origins of the Present Crisis"<sup>6</sup> argued that the problem with British capitalism had to be traced back to the miscarriage of the bourgeois revolution in England.

The distinctive facets of English class structure, as it has evolved over three centuries, can thus be summed up as follows. After a bitter, cathartic revolution which *transformed the structure but not the superstructure of English society*, a landed aristocracy, underpinned by a powerful mercantile affinal group, became the first dominant capitalist class in Britain...Undisturbed by a feudal state, terrified by the French Revolution and its own proletariat, mesmerized by the prestige and authority of the landed class, the bourgeoisie won two modest

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<sup>1</sup>Leo Panitch, "Socialists and the Labour Party: a Reappraisal", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1979, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 68-69.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>5</sup>Perry Anderson, "Critique of Wilsonism", *New Left Review*, no 27, 1964.

<sup>6</sup>Perry Anderson, "Origins of the Present Crisis", *New Left Review*, no 23, 1964.

victories, lost its nerve and ended by losing its identity...The working class fought passionately and unaided against the advent of industrial capitalism; its extreme exhaustion after successive defeats was the measure of its efforts...<sup>1</sup>

Certainly there is a problem here with the idea of a transformation in the mode of production which does not have a corresponding transformation in the mode of existence. Nevertheless in Anderson's essay an attempt is made to understand the British contemporary crisis in Gramscian terms. A neo-Gramscian concept of hegemony emerged in the form of placing the emphasis on the superstructure and more precisely on the politics of hegemony.

The power structure of English society today can be most accurately described as an immensely elastic and all-embracing hegemonic order. Hegemony was defined by Gramsci as the dominance of one social bloc over another, not simply by means of force or wealth, but by a total social authority whose ultimate sanction and expression is *a profound cultural supremacy*.<sup>2</sup>

According to Anderson the unfinished bourgeois revolution in England had had as an effect the production of both an inferior bourgeoisie and a weak proletariat.

In England, a supine bourgeoisie produced a subordinate proletariat. The intellectual lineage of the Webbs and their companions was brutally explicit and avowed: they were the direct successors of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill and the positivist ideologues of the mid-19th century (Herbert Spencer, etc.). No more poisoned legacy could have been left the working-class movement. Complacent confusion of influence with power, bovine admiration for bureaucracy, ill-concealed contempt for equality, bottomless philistinism - all the characteristic narrowness of the Webbs and their associates became imprinted on the dominant ideology of the Labour Party thereafter.<sup>3</sup>

The first twelve issues of the *New Left Review* were a continuation of the policies of the *Universities and Left Review* and of the anti-Stalinist socialist-humanism of the *New Reasoner*. The Editorial Board of the *New Left Review* and its first editor, Stuart Hall, continued in the tradition of the "movement of ideas", stamped with an exclusive British brand. Things changed dramatically when Perry Anderson's *coup d'état* took place in 1962 -from number fifteen of the journal he became Editor of the *New Left Review*. The new editorial board of the *New Left Review* made clear that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 38-39, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 39, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

the period of Britishness was well over with the introduction of what they called: "Western Marxism".<sup>1</sup> Internal and external factors played their significant part in the journal's change of direction.

E. P. Thompson gave his witty account of the dissolution of the first editorial board as follows:

Early in 1962, when the affairs of *New Left Review* were in some confusion, the New Left Board invited an able contributor, Perry Anderson, to take over the editorship. We found (as we had hoped) in Comrade Anderson, the decision and the intellectual coherence necessary to ensure the review's continuance. More than that, we discovered that we had appointed a veritable Dr Beeching of the socialist intelligentsia. All the uneconomic branch-lines and socio-cultural sidings of the New Left which were, in any case, carrying less and less traffic, were abruptly closed down. The main lines of the review underwent an equally ruthless modernisation. Old Left steam engines were swept off the tracks; wayside halts ("Commitment", "What Next for CND?", "Women in Love") were boarded up; and the lines were electrified for the speedy traffic from the Marxist Left Bank. In less than a year the founders of the review discovered, to their chagrin, that the Board lived on a branchline which, after rigorous intellectual costing, had been found uneconomic. Finding ourselves redundant, we submitted to dissolution.<sup>2</sup>

The most noticeable change was the further disengagement of the journal from practical politics. There is no surprise in this if one takes into consideration the "Old" New Left's opposition to the organisation of a political movement and their favourite alternative in the shape of a loose network of cultural activity. This not yet theorised "theoretical practice" in the notion of the "autonomy of theory"; i.e. of theory as an autonomous milieu of practice, alongside the changing climate towards party activity reached its peak when Perry Anderson became the editor of the *New Left Review*.

As it was already mentioned the New Left of the *New Left Review* under Perry Anderson's involvement in 1962 and especially after his editorship was finally established in 1964 changed entirely the journal's direction from a narrow Englishness to a broad Europeanisation in its approach to what they named Western Marxism. The battle of ideas which began in the mid fifties finally found its theoretical autonomy in the new style review in a last desperate attempt to educate the British working class, since no practical change in the sphere of Labourist politics was visible. An early belief in the revivification of the Labour Party's socialist understanding personified in

<sup>1</sup>See Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, New Left Books, London, 1976.

<sup>2</sup>E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, Merlin Press, London, 1978, p. 35.



Wilson's leadership suffered an early death in the aspirations of the New Left. Theory was the main and only terrain left for them and they laboriously set out to explore it. Antonio Gramsci's Marxism and the Structuralist School were the new departures from the old tradition and their tools of analysis of the British society in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>1</sup> The 'old guard' of the New Left returned in the 1970s to contribute in the instrumentalist/structuralist debate, that is Miliband vs. Poulantzas. The "old" New Left's contributions to the *New Left Review* in the 1970s marked the era of reconciliation of the "Old" with the "New" New Left.

The New Left's position in the 1960s was critical towards the Labour Party policies. Their analysis of the Labour Party especially under the Wilson leadership was in line with the new ideas concerning automation and a scientific management of capitalism. Wilson was seen by the *New Left Review's* contributors as the personification of modernization and efficiency and as the guarantor of the new look Labour Party, a Party which left behind such anachronisms as the ghost of anti-communism, a Party that was working for a new Britain. Wilsonism was seen as a progressive brand of Labourism potentially open to reform. Things started to change in the late 1960s and early 1970s when this new look Wilsonite party proved incapable of moving forward to socialist transformation both in its ideology and its practice. Tom Nairn's article on the Wilson record<sup>2</sup> pointed out that the Labour Party had changed little in terms of its foreign policy. The journal moved away from practical politics after the disappointment of the Wilson experiment and devoted itself totally to questions of theory, bringing into the Anglo-Saxon world of "little Englandism" the works of the most controversial and not so controversial theorists of almost all around the globe. One of the most important debates to see the light of life in the pages of *New Left Review* was the aforementioned Miliband vs. Poulantzas theoretical antithesis, which was seen as a conflict between instrumentalism and structuralism. Structuralism and neo-Gramscianism were the theoretical links which marked the reconciliation of the "Old" with the "New" New Left. We will discuss the structuralist approach in the course of our analysis of one of the "Old" New Left's work on "Thatcherism", namely Stuart Hall's theory of "authoritarian populism". But for the time being what is important to remember is the New Left's stand towards practical

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<sup>1</sup>Perry Anderson's "Origins of the Present Crisis" (*New Left Review*, no 23, 1964), "Critique of Wilsonism" (*New Left Review*, no 27, 1964) and "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci" (*New Left Review*, no 100, 1976/1977) together with Tom Nairn's "Anatomy of the Labour Party" (*New Left Review*, no 27, and no 28, 1964) and "Labour's Imperialism" (*New Left Review*, no 32, 1965) are apt examples of this tendency.

<sup>2</sup>See Tom Nairn, "Labour's Imperialism", *New Left Review*, no 32, 1965.



politics in the 1970s that is their disengagement both from their previous effort to transform the Labour Party and to build an alternative to it.

### III. 3. THEORETICAL DEBATES: 1956-1978

The theoretical debates among the British Left in the 1960s and 1970s were predominantly woven around the work of Antonio Gramsci, Nicos Poulantzas, Santiago Carrillo and Michel Aglietta. Their theories, transformed, adopted or criticized, were imported to Britain either by the New Left or by the Communist Party of Great Britain in the *New Left Review* and *Marxism Today* journals respectively.

Gramsci's writings were as influential to the "newer" New Left as Marx's early writings were important to the "old" New Left of the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> The decisive element for the Left's (both New Left's and the Communist Party of Great Britain's) preference for Gramsci's writings was the concept of "*hegemony*"<sup>2</sup> As the New Left wanted to break from the old values of reformism and labourism and their representatives in the sphere of politics, they decided to place their emphasis on culture. Culture -as they understood it- was not exclusively what is usually called "high art" but a whole domain of the expression of civil society. Consent and coercion are the two dialectically interrelated moments of state power in Gramsci's analysis but their neo-Gramscian interpretation placed most of the emphasis on consent. According to the neo-Gramscian understanding, the state (ruling class/political society) exercises its hegemony predominantly through consent, that is through its ideological domination over civil society, a fact that makes coercion necessary only in the last instance. If the domain of cultural politics was captured by the forces of change, i. e., the working class and its allies, then a domination of the state would be possible without a revolution and eventually without having to confront directly state power, but through the transformation of the ideological state

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<sup>1</sup>Gramsci was first translated into English in 1957 in Antonio Gramsci: *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, translated and edited by Dr Louis Marks, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1957; an article by Christopher Hill on Antonio Gramsci and this particular publication can be found in the journal *The New Reasoner*, no 3, 1957, p. 107ff, and Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* were first translated and published by Lawrence and Wishart in 1971.

<sup>2</sup>For the concept of "hegemony" see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1971; Robert Bocoock, *Hegemony*, Tavistock, London, 1977; Chantal Mouffe (ed) *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979; Anne Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's Politics*, Croom Helm, London, 1980; C. Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1981; John Hoffman, *The Gramscian Challenge*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984.

apparatuses. The latter should not be destroyed for the simple reason that it might be very difficult for the new occupants of the state to create new ones. The idea of capturing the ideological state apparatuses without smashing them was discussed in Santiago Carrillo's analysis of ideology,<sup>1</sup> but the theoretical tools could be traced back to Gramsci's analysis of the "national-popular" culture.<sup>2</sup> Gramsci's antinomies<sup>3</sup> could be explained by the material conditions of his very personal condition; he was imprisoned under Fascism, a fact that cut him off from everyday politics, not to mention the Damocles' sword of censorship; just to give only an example to illustrate the latter: Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks*, referred to Marxism as "the philosophy of praxis".

The British Eurocommunists used Gramsci as a counter-weight to Stalinism as the latter was articulated in the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. The most apt example is the Communist Party of Great Britain and its 1977 edition of the *British Road to Socialism*, as this was discussed in relation to the Party's stand in the 1970s. Gramsci's theory was interpreted by the Eurocommunists with the stress on consent rather than coercion (the Janus-like dual face of the State), and their separation of the war of manoeuvre from the war of position -Gramsci's two strategies which he never separated (the neo-Gramscian interpretation of the war of position as a strategy for the longer term as opposed to what they understand as a revolution, the latter being expressed in the concept of the war of manoeuvre)- provided them with the tools to justify the peaceful road to socialism. All that was needed for the democratic alliance was to build a consensus for socialist transformation. By stressing only one aspect of hegemony, that is the ideological (moral leadership), the Eurocommunists seem to misread the Gramscian understanding of the role of the state. The state is, according to Gramsci, dictatorship plus hegemony. The one element does not exclude the other. Whenever consent is not possible then an open dictatorship is the outcome. A hegemonic project involves primarily the concept of moral leadership (ideological level) and subsequently economic and political leadership. Gramsci believed that in order for a class to be dominant it should achieve hegemony on the moral ground first, i.e., the dominated classes should accept its leadership. This was a call to the working

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<sup>1</sup>See Santiago Carrillo, *'Eurocommunism' and the State*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1977; Santiago Carrillo, *Dialogue on Spain*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1977.

<sup>2</sup>See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1985; see also the references given in the previous footnote related to the concept of "hegemony".

<sup>3</sup>See Perry Anderson's interesting article: "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci", *New Left Review*, no 100, 1976/1977.

class in Fascist Italy to impose its popular -not to be confused with populist- culture. Is it possible for the working class to impose its hegemonic culture on the one hand and to achieve the consent of the capitalist class for the transformation of the state and the transition to socialism by peaceful means alone, i.e. through the parliamentary form? How easy it is to reverse the process and make the bourgeoisie 'voluntarily accept' the democratic road to socialism, only because democratic freedoms will be guaranteed. It is an established fact that the bourgeoisie was already dominant in the economic level before it gained the moral leadership of society. Can it ever be true for the working class?

The New Left's preference for Gramsci can be explained from the position of cultural and ideological leadership that Gramsci reserved for the intellectuals in the successful implementation of hegemonic politics. The role of the "organic" and the "traditional" intellectuals -the latter were the spokespersons of the old régime, the former working for the forces of change- had its impact on the New Left who mostly were academics or students and considered themselves as the British equivalent of the Gramscian "organic" intellectuals.

Equally important to the debates on the state, class structure and the tendency of the modern capitalist state towards a new authoritarianism was the work of Nicos Poulantzas. The Poulantzas - Miliband debate of the early 1970s (Poulantzas 1969, 1976 and Miliband 1970, 1973)<sup>1</sup> in the *New Left Review* succeeded in bringing a regeneration of the theory of the state in Britain.

The question of the *relative autonomy* of the State in capitalist society is one of the most important and ambiguous of Poulantzas's contributions to the Marxist theory of the State.<sup>2</sup> Starting from the Althusserian separation of the repressive from the ideological state apparatuses, Poulantzas goes on to criticize Althusser's view of the ideological state apparatuses as being state apparatuses to the extent that they primarily play a role in the reproduction of the relations of production. According to Poulantzas the ideological state apparatuses have a relative autonomy from the repressive state

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<sup>1</sup>Nicos Poulantzas - Ralph Miliband - Jean Pierre Faye, (1981) *Problems of the Modern State and the Fascist Phenomenon*, Athens: Themelio, and in *New Left Review*: Nicos Poulantzas, "The Problem of the Capitalist State", no 58, 1969; Ralph Miliband, "A reply to Nicos Poulantzas", no 59, 1970; Ralph Miliband, "Nicos Poulantzas and the Capitalist State", no 82, 1973; Nicos Poulantzas, "The Capitalist State: a reply to Ralph Miliband", no 95, 1976.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of Poulantzas's theory of the state see Bob Jessop, *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy*, Macmillan, London, 1985; for a critique of Poulantzas' see Simon Clarke, "Marxist Sociology and Poulantzas Theory of the State", *Capital & Class*, no 2, Summer 1977; Simon Clarke, "Capital, Fractions of Capital and the State: 'Neo-Marxist' Analysis of the South African Crisis", *Capital & Class*, no 5, Summer 1978.

apparatuses and from the state apparatus in general. This is in tune with the Eurocommunist approach and its separation of ideology from violence, and consequently with the strategic commitment of the Eurocommunist Parties to the "third road" to socialism and the safekeeping of all the bourgeois institutions; the latter were to be transformed rather than "smashed". Poulantzas was insisting that ideology was integrated into institutions and also that real persons were carrying it out and reproducing it. Eurocommunism built up its strategy of hegemonic consensus on this latter approach. Poulantzas's analysis had a direct impact on the analysis of the British state through the work of Bob Jessop and Stuart Hall.

According to Poulantzas:

...the ideological State apparatuses display *a degree and form of relative autonomy* which the branches of the repressive State apparatus do not possess...One of the main consequences is that the 'destruction' of the State cannot be identical for the State apparatus and for the ideological State apparatuses: the ideological apparatuses cannot be 'smashed' at the same time or in the same way as the State apparatus, or as each other...(c) The relative autonomy of the ideological State apparatuses therefore finally relates to the relations of political power in the strict sense, and is expressed in major dislocation of *State power*...State power is generally formed by an alliance of the dominant classes or class fraction, the power bloc in a capitalist social formation.<sup>1</sup>

For Althusser the ideological state apparatuses *are* relatively autonomous but their unity is due to the ruling ideology.<sup>2</sup> The latter is seen as the ideology of the ruling class which holds State power and this is precisely what Poulantzas was criticizing; that the Althusserian approach did not take into account the existence of various contradictory ideologies emerging from the different classes and class fractions in a social formation and also that State power imposes limitations on the ideological State apparatuses which (the limitations) are not the exclusive effect of the ruling ideology but of State power itself *within* the repressive State apparatus.

Poulantzas's solution was to place the emphasis on the relative autonomy of the state (political level, relations of political domination/subordination, the terrain of political struggle) from the classes in the conjuncture (the social formation) and also to

<sup>1</sup>Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, NLB, London, 1974, pp. 305-307, emphasis in the original.

<sup>2</sup>See Louis Althusser, *Theses*, Themelio, Athens, 1983 ; Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, Penguin, London, 1969; Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, NLB, London, 1971; for a discussion of Althusser's theory from a Trotskyist standpoint see Alex Callinicos, *Althusser's Marxism*, Pluto Press, London, 1976 and Alex Callinicos, *Marxism and Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985.



emphasize the autonomy of the other two levels of the structure, namely the ideological (relations of ideological domination/subordination, the terrain of ideological struggle) and the economic (relations of production, relations of exploitation, the terrain of economic struggle), from the strictly repressive state apparatuses (i. e., police, army). The three levels or instances: ideological, political and economic comprise the state structure. Poulantzas critique of Miliband's analysis of the state was based on the latter's use of elements of élite theory in his broader neo-Gramscian approach where the dominance of capital is explained as the dominance of a social group owning and controlling a disproportionate share of material resources and so is constituted at the level of social interactions and not at the level of the relations of production. The state continues to be a neutral instrument serving the interests of big capital through the latter's mediating domination of civil society, the domain of ideological and institutional relations. The neo-Gramscian analysis insists on contesting bourgeois domination of civil society by contesting the ideological consensus imposed by the bourgeoisie prior to the conquest of the state apparatus itself. Although Poulantzas understood the state as a relation of forces in contrast to the idea of the state as a fortress that can be taken only from the outside by a strategy of assault (Lenin) or encircling (Gramsci) he placed the emphasis on objective structures rather than individual subjects - a stretching to the limits of Althusser's "theoretical anti-humanism".<sup>1</sup> Poulantzas based his theory of social class on the distinction between the level of structures and the level of practices. The relations within the structure are not social relations and therefore are not relations of exploitation or domination but technical relations of material production and relations of ownership of agents to the means of production. The social relations of production are relations between social classes constituted by the distribution of the product. According to Poulantzas, the source and not the size of income is the decisive element in the constitution of classes. Ideological and political factors which constitute the social division of labour are equally important in defining class position.

Poulantzas's theory of class is most elaborated in his book *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (1975), where he refers to the concept of "social formation" which comprises more than one mode of production, so we can define more than two classes involved although the main antagonism always lies between the two dominant classes, which in the case of the capitalist mode of production are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat respectively.

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<sup>1</sup>For Althusser's criticism of "socialist-humanism", see Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, Allen Lane, Penguin Books, London, 1969, ch. 7.



Poulantzas uses primarily two concepts to define class position. The first one is the distinction between *productive* and *unproductive labour* and the second one is the division between *mental* and *manual labour* (in the sense of who holds the knowledge as power, and who is excluded from it). According to Poulantzas social classes are defined as follows:

It may thus be said that a social class is defined by its place in the ensemble of social practices, i. e. by its place in the social division of labour as a whole. This includes political and ideological relations. Social class, in this sense, is a concept which denotes the effects of the structure within the social division of labour (social relations and social practices). This place thus corresponds to what I shall refer to as the structural determination of class, i.e. to the existence within class practices of determination by the structure -by the relations of production, and by the places of political and ideological domination/subordination. Classes exist only in the class struggle.

4. The structural determination of classes, which exists only as the class struggle, must however be distinguished from class position in each specific conjuncture -the focal point of the always unique historic individuality of a social formation, in other words the concrete situation of the class struggle. In stressing the importance of political and ideological relations in determining social classes, and the fact that social classes only exist in the form of class struggle and practices, class determination must not be reduced, in a voluntarist fashion, to class position. The importance of this lies in those cases in which a distance arises between the structural determination of classes and the class positions in the conjuncture.<sup>1</sup>

Poulantzas insisted that class positions cannot be defined simply at the level of economic relations; political and ideological forms must be taken into account as well. "Political relations" are a determinant of class position especially when these are concerned with relations of supervision and authority:

The work of management and supervision under capitalism is the direct reproduction, within the process of production itself, of the political relations between the capitalist class and the working class.<sup>2</sup>

These individuals, or better, class members should be placed in the new petty bourgeoisie even if they engage in productive labour -in terms of producing surplus value- in the production process.

"Ideological relations" are used by Poulantzas mainly to refer to the status division between mental and manual labour. Thus, for example, a white collar technician

<sup>1</sup>Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, NLB, London, 1975, pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

occupies a position of ideological domination of the working class because of the ideological role of "expertise" within capitalist society. The important thing for the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production is that the working class should be persuaded that it is incapable of organising the production process on its own and is always in need of the "experts", the "mental" labourers. Hence, Poulantzas argues that even if these experts do not supervise anyone, and even if they are productive labourers, mental labourers should still be placed in the new petty bourgeoisie.

The distinction between the working class and the new petty bourgeoisie is defined primarily by the distinction between productive and unproductive labour and secondarily by the relations of political and ideological domination and subordination. The division between the petty bourgeoisie and the capitalist class is analysed primarily in terms of the relations of ownership and the possession of the means of production. Here what is important is not legal ownership or possession but ownership and possession, that is, the capacity to exercise the rights arising from these relations.

The resemblance between the old petty bourgeoisie and the new petty bourgeoisie that makes both of them constitute a class is the same "pertinent" effects that their economic relations have at the level of ideology: anti-capitalism of the status quo, belief in upward social mobility, individualism, desire for power.<sup>1</sup> As Poulantzas wrote:

The traditional petty bourgeoisie has its economic basis in small-scale production and/or small-scale ownership but is not directly involved in exploiting wage-labour, in contrast the new petty bourgeoisie comprises non-productive salaried employees. The latter are not directly producers of capitalist commodities but they are involved in reproducing the conditions of surplus-value production in their capacities as circulation workers, engineers, civil servants, teachers, etc.<sup>2</sup>

According to Poulantzas, the petty-bourgeoisie's unity as a whole is expressed not at the level of the economic relations but "to the extent that the different economic entrances of its different functions produce the distinctive results at the political and ideological levels."

Poulantzas's structuralism became very important especially in the 1980s when Stuart Hall enriched his cultural/ideological analysis of "Thatcherism" with Poulantzas's theory of "*authoritarian statism*". The term emerged in the Part Four of

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<sup>1</sup>See, Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, NLB, London, 1974, p. 241

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

Nicos Poulantzas's book *State, Power, Socialism* (1978), where Poulantzas pointed out the tendency of the modern capitalist state towards what he saw as an "intensive" *étatisme* and a move towards "authoritarian statism".<sup>1</sup> Poulantzas in an interview in *Marxism Today*, July 1979 defined "authoritarian statism" as "a new phase of the state" but "without identifying it with a specific régime"<sup>2</sup> or with an exceptional form of the capitalist state like Fascism, Bonapartism or military dictatorship.<sup>3</sup> In Poulantzas's analysis the ideological elements of authoritarian statism were discussed alongside the political and economic aspects of it and also the anti-capitalism of the status quo together with the populist aspects of anti-statism, which at the end of the day takes the shape of *statolatry*.<sup>4</sup>

Poulantzas's analysis made clear the interventionist role of the state under conditions of crisis. The state in its neo-liberal form cannot withdraw from one sphere of socio-economic life without intervening in another.

Stuart Hall's use of the concept of "authoritarian statism" in his analysis of the phenomenon of "Thatcherism" as a form of "authoritarian populism" and a petty bourgeois revolt will be discussed in a separate section of Chapter IV.

All the above theorists influenced in one way or another the Labour Party's and the Communist Party's thought as we will have the chance to analyse in more detail in the following chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> See Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, NLB, London, 1978, pp. 203-4 and also Nicos Poulantzas, "Interview", *Marxism Today*, July 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, "Interview", *Marxism Today*, July 1979, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> See Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship*, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

## CHAPTER IV: LEFT INTERPRETATIONS OF "THATCHERISM" AND THE "NEW-REVISIONISM" IN BRITAIN: 1978-1989

There are three stages through which every new notion in England has to pass: It is impossible: It is against the Bible: We knew it before. Socialism is rapidly reaching the third of these stages. 'We are all Socialists now'...[Sidney Webb, "English Progress Towards Social Democracy"]<sup>1</sup>

### IV. 1. THE CRISIS OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

1978 has all the qualifications to be nominated both the *annum mirabilis* and the landmark of the "new-revisionism" in Britain.<sup>2</sup> A long debate on the role of the Labour Party, the crisis of the labour movement and the need for a drastic re-thinking of socialism in Britain was stimulated by Professor Eric Hobsbawm's -a prominent historian and member of the Communist Party of Great Britain- Marx Memorial Lecture delivered in September 1978, at a time when the Labour Party was still in office. It was first published in the Communist Party of Great Britain's theoretical and discussion journal, *Marxism Today* as "The Forward March of Labour Halted?". Two years later (1981) this essay gave the title to a collective book, the outcome of the debate generated in the above journal on the process and development of the labour movement in post-war Britain and especially the last years of the Callaghan government and the first two years of the Thatcher administration.<sup>3</sup>

Eric Hobsbawm periodized the British labour movement and its development during the past hundred years and argued that the clear cut working class majority of the 1870s was withering in the 1970s. Its place was taken by an increasing white-collar stratum that was more likely to vote Tory than Labour. Class realignment was manifested in the diminishing weight of the working class ethos of solidarity. Hobsbawm traced a steady decline not so much in class interests as in class consciousness.<sup>4</sup> The latter was demonstrated in the trade unions mode of struggle

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<sup>1</sup>Sidney Webb, "English Progress Towards Social Democracy", *Fabian Tract*, no 15, 1892, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>The "Winter of Discontent" 1978-79 recorded the highest levels of industrial militancy since the days of the 1926 General Strike.

<sup>3</sup>See Martin Jacques & Francis Malhern (eds), *The Forward March of Labour Halted?*, *Marxism Today* and Verso Editions & NLB, London, 1981.

<sup>4</sup>For a more recent reminder of the diminishing strength of class consciousness, see Eric Hobsbawm's Bonn lecture -(delivered in 1988 to commemorate the 125 years of

which -according to Hobsbawm- in the last years was increasingly "economistic", i. e., the main preoccupation was with gaining higher wages by irresponsibly using the strike weapon the result of which was to cause more damage to the wider society rather than the private capitalists. As he put it:

...that groups of workers strike, not minding the effect on the rest -skilled men on labourers, for example- but that the strength of a group lies not in the amount of loss they can cause to the employer, but in the inconvenience they can cause to the public, that is, to other workers by power blackouts or whatever. This is a natural consequence of a state-monopoly capitalist system in which the basic target of pressure is not the bank account of private employers but, directly or indirectly, the political will of the government.<sup>1</sup>

Hobsbawm also argued that the *nature* of the capitalist system has changed dramatically from the days of liberal capitalism. State monopoly capitalism has so much politicized decisions in the public sector that politics and not the realisation of profits became the primary consideration of the state owned sector. He argued that:

*...the factors which determine the worker's conditions are no longer, to any major extent, those of capitalist competition.* The capitalist sector is no longer one dominated by the free market, since it is largely monopolised; and the public sector, both as an employer, as the provider of all manner of social services and payments, and as the manager of the economy, very largely determines them, or at least the limits within which they are fixed. *Political and not profit decisions determine it.*<sup>2</sup>

His argument was focused upon the central theme of the decline in Labour support from the industrial working class. Its decline had been analysed in terms of a decline in working class "membership"; that is since the working class was supposed to include only the manual workforce and taking the fact that the latter's proportion in the population was in a steady decline, then according to Hobsbawm, the Labour Party which traditionally served as the representative of the interests of the manual labourers cannot but expect to suffer as a result of their falling numbers. Hobsbawm also suggested that the decline in the Labour vote was a result of the failure of the trade union movement to make any significant advances in membership. A combination of all these negative factors made a Labour victory no longer dependable on the manual

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the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD)- text reprinted in *New Left Review*, no 173, 1989 as "Farewell to the Classic Labour Movement?".

<sup>1</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, "The Forward March of Labour Halted?", *Marxism Today*, September 1978, p. 284.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 282, emphasis added.



working class alone but call for a different set of policies able to appeal to a wider electorate, to the "middle-ground" of politics. The winning or for that matter losing formula read as follows: deindustrialisation = a decline of manual occupations = an increase of white-collar workers = higher wages = affluence = *embourgeoisement* in recession.

The 'Red Bologna'<sup>1</sup> syndrome dominated Hobsbawm's analysis. His model was the Eurocommunist Italian Communist Party [*Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI)] whose policies toward civil society were considered to be crowned with success due to the PCI's capability to gain *popular* support from the forces outside the traditional working class in its building of a hegemonic power bloc. To Hobsbawm the British Labour Party would gain governmental power only if it made a successful appeal to a wider electorate in terms of *national-popular*<sup>2</sup> and not strictly *class politics*. His call was for the building of an alliance, that is a version of the 1930s Popular Front.<sup>3</sup> As Hobsbawm pointed out:

The future of Labour and the advance to socialism depends on mobilizing people who remember the date of Beatles' break-up and not the date of the Satley pickets; of people who have never read Tribune and who do not care a damn about the deputy leadership of the Labour Party.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The "Red Bologna" syndrome refers to the British Eurocommunists' admiration for the achievements of the Northern Italian city of Bologna. A communist majority -led by the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI)- was obtained in 1975. Bologna is considered a model of "municipal socialism" well beyond the frontiers of the Emilia Romano region. See Max Jaggi, Roger Muller and Sil Schmid, *Red Bologna*, with an Introduction by Donald Sassoon, Writers and Readers, London, c1977.

<sup>2</sup>Eric Hobsbawm's analysis is greatly influenced by the writings of Antonio Gramsci. See especially Hobsbawm's article on "Gramsci and Political Theory", in *Marxism Today*, July 1977 and "Intellectuals and the Labour Movement", *Marxism Today*, July 1979 and also his *Politics for a Rational Left* -a collection of essays- Verso, London, 1989. For the meaning of the "national-popular", with its variants (i. e., 'people-nation') concept, see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, edited by David Forgas and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, translated by William Boelhower, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1985; for an analysis of Gramsci's contribution to the Marxist theory of the State, see especially, C. Buci-Gluksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1981 and John Hoffman, *The Gramscian Challenge*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984.

<sup>3</sup>For Hobsbawm's analysis of the 1930s Popular Front against Fascism, see especially his "Forty Years of Popular Front Government", *Marxism Today*, July 1976 and also "The Retreat into Extremism", *Marxism Today*, April 1985.

<sup>4</sup>Eric Hobsbawm's essay, in Martin Jacques & Francis Malhern, (eds) *The Forward March of Labour Halted?*, *Marxism Today* and Verso Editions & NLB, London, 1981, p. 181.

The same line of argument was advanced in his other influential essay "Labour's Lost Millions" published in *Marxism Today* in October 1983, where he gave one of the most authoritative versions of the causes of the "Thatcherite" landslide in that period. As he put it:

We cannot abandon this tradition of being a broad people's party, for if Labour were to recover only the support of *the manual working class*, it would probably no longer be enough to give it victory, given the *decline in its numbers* and the *rate of deindustrialisation*.<sup>1</sup>

And also because:

The Labour vote remains largely working class; but the working class has ceased to be largely Labour.<sup>2</sup>

In which case:

...the main question at issue on the Left was not: what government? but: what Labour Party? To put it brutally, for many a Thatcher government was preferable to a reformist Labour government.<sup>3</sup>

Hobsbawm finally addressed the emerging "Brave New World" and asked the Labour Party to transform its image in order to capture the new territory. Because:

The working class has changed. The country has changed. The situation has changed. And, let us not forget the party too has changed and quite a few of its old supporters do not recognise themselves so readily in it.<sup>4</sup>

In practical terms, there was a set of political and strategic implications deriving from this line of argument. Eric Hobsbawm's call could be seen as a modern version of the 1930s strategy of the Popular Front, based on a working class and a middle class broad democratic alliance, as he was already arguing in 1976:

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<sup>1</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, "Labour's Lost Millions", *Marxism Today*, October 1983, p. 10, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

...the situation in which people's fronts arise. Broad alliances of groups and parties, including people's fronts, are necessary only when the working-class party is not strong enough to win on its own: it rarely is.<sup>1</sup>

Hobsbawm's call for *popular* as opposed to class politics became clear in his more recent writings.<sup>2</sup> As he put it:

Labour has to appeal to a variety of interests and attitudes, i. e., to think in terms very similar to those of *building an alliance or coalition*...To practice "class politics" can no longer be realistically counterposed to "people's politics".<sup>3</sup>

Hobsbawm's intervention has many similarities with the "old-revisionism" debate of the 1950s when it was argued that the Labour Party had to rethink the "cloth-cap" image of its socialism and try to (re)capture the fast expanding deproletarianised working class. The same pattern of exegesis is evolved in the new revisionist debate where there is again a direct attempt to deduce from changing electoral patterns explanations for recompositions in the socio-economic arena seemingly without taking into consideration other factors like for example the role of the party as a mediator of socio-political interests, or the role of ideology in determining voting behaviour. The "new-revisionist" thesis places an unbalanced weight on the changes in voting behaviour and class structure. The "Crewe-Hobsbawm School of Psephology" renews a deterministic reading of electoral trends precisely because it starts from the presupposition that the Labour Party *is* the natural party of the working class, and that the working class voters naturally vote for the workers' party. If other factors (i.e., false consciousness)<sup>4</sup> are not taken into consideration then it is no surprise that Hobsbawm could argue that:

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<sup>1</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, "Forty Years of Popular Front Government", *Marxism Today*, July 1976, p. 227.

<sup>2</sup>See Eric Hobsbawm, "Out of the Wilderness", *Marxism Today*, October 1987; "No Sense of Mission", *Marxism Today*, April 1988; "Past Imperfect, Future Tense", *Marxism Today*, October 1988.

<sup>3</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, "Out of the Wilderness", *Marxism Today*, October 1987, pp. 16-17, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup>See Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, Merlin Press, London, 1971; Friedrich Engels's letter to F. Mehring, London, July 14, 1893, in Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels / V. I. Lenin, *On Historical Materialism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1984, pp. 303-305; Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1965.

We have a double task: to rethink our policy and to rethink the social forces which can create a viable basis for a progressive government.<sup>1</sup>

Another aspect for consideration is Hobsbawm's idealization of the Popular Front of the 1930s which seems to overlook the historic fact that the Labour Party was against this strategy and even expelled some of its own members who advocated it.<sup>2</sup> Another critical factor in the broad anti-Thatcherite Alliance strategy is that the past experience showed that alliances at the top between parliamentarians and trade union activists is not equated with a mobilization at the base, that is, for example, with new social movements, such as the peace movement, or the women's movement. Hobsbawm's persistence in the dilution of socialist politics towards more centrist positions as a presupposition of the making of an anti-Thatcherite hegemonic bloc faces the real danger of leading to *populist* policies, and this possibility is real enough if one looks at the Labour Party's new strategies for electoral appeal, i. e., growing confrontation with the trade union movement expressed in the strategy of "one man one vote", mounting contempt for industrial militancy and a fresh "rosy" public image to mention only a few of the developments in this era.

Eric Hobsbawm's approach obtained a great deal of right-wing Labour attention but it came under scrutiny from a socialist perspective.<sup>3</sup> Industrial militancy between 1968 and 1974, which Hobsbawm dismissed as wage-militancy, was regarded instead as part of the re-awakening of socialist aims. The working class was not a spectator of the crisis but, as Royden Harrison put it, "the crisis itself".<sup>4</sup> The political stalemate resulted because the trade unions' organisational capability resisted capitalist rationalisation, while the broad working class movement had not been in the position to impose its will and solutions to the crisis.

The political stalemate was seen as the failure of the so-called post-war social democratic consensus. Geoff Hodgson argued that the major expression of this within the Labour Party was the withering of "Croslandism".<sup>5</sup> Others like John Ross argued that the decline of the Labour Party vote and political strength was the outcome

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>See Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, Macmillan, London 1961, (1978), pp. 81-84. Stafford Cripps, Charles Trevelyan, George Strauss and Anuerin Bevan were expelled from the Labour Party by the National Executive Committee because they advocated the policies of the 'United Front' or 'Popular Front' as it was by then known.

<sup>3</sup>See "The guru who retains Kinnock's ear", *The Observer*, September 29, 1985.

<sup>4</sup>See Royden Harrison's contribution to the discussion on "The Forward March of Labour Halted?", *Marxism Today*, June 1979.

<sup>5</sup>See Geoff Hodgson, *Labour at the Crossroads, The Political and Economic Challenge to the Labour Party in the 1980s*, Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1981.



of the overall weakening of the two party system. According to him the cause was a crisis of representation which, together with the fracturing of the system of power, was the reason for the Right's advance in Britain. The Labour Party should either enter into a coalition with other anti-conservative forces or to be transformed into a mass popular socialist party.<sup>1</sup>

A socialist feminist critique of Hobsbawm's approach came from Doreen Massey, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright in their contribution to *The Future of the Left* (1984) where they questioned the practical problems of an alliance strategy and the reasons for the unpopularity of socialism in Britain. They claimed that:

The unpopularity of the left is not so much due to popular disagreement with left ideas (if they ever heard of them) as to an absence of any apparent strategy for putting them into practice and therefore a feeling that they are pie in the sky.<sup>2</sup>

And:

...There is no better way of convincing people than by the propaganda of practical examples.<sup>3</sup>

They criticised the trade unions policies as representing "the Great-Moving-Right-Male-Left-Show"<sup>4</sup> and finally they proposed their own alternative which was in their words:

The ability to illustrate an alternative both to Thatcherism and to Labourism is based on the *feminist, anti-racist, anti-nuclear* and more generally *socialist ideas* emerging throughout the sixties and seventies - partly as a reaction to the failures of Labourism.<sup>5</sup>

They argued that the strategy to be put forward should make sure that:

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<sup>1</sup>See John Ross, *Thatcher and Friends: The Anatomy of the Tory Party*, Pluto Press, London, 1984 and for arguments for and against an alliance strategy, see especially William's and Pimlott's essays in James Curran (ed), *The Future of the Left*, Polity Press & *New Socialist*, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 182-210, and also Eric Heffer, *Labour's Future, Socialist or SDP Mark 2?*, Verso, London, 1986, pp.116ff; Eric Heffer, "Labour's Lost Millions II: Alliances aren't the answer", *Marxism Today*, December 1983, against Hobsbawm's alliance strategy call.

<sup>2</sup>Doreen Massey, Lynne Segal, Hilary Wainwright, "And Now for the Good News", in James Curran (ed), *The Future of the Left*, op. cit., p. 223.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 226, emphasis added.

...resources and powers are made use of to strengthen, support and give a voice to *industrial* and *extra-parliamentary* action.<sup>1</sup>

The whole debate on the crisis of the labour movement reflected the social democratic parties' dilemma, that is, to choose between abandoning their mass character and re-thinking their socialist goals in order to form governments.

Those parties reconsideration of their socialist goals then allows them to enter into coalition politics. Certainly there is no *ipso facto* betrayal of socialist goals if socialist parties enter into alliances; the problem is, rather, who will play the hegemonic role in the power bloc. "Alliance" strategies differ from "coalition" politics. An alliance between social forces is a strategy for hegemony in which each party to the agreement keeps its own identity. A coalition implies a fusion of the forces involved and to a certain degree a compromise consensus; it also presupposes a common viewpoint in terms of ideology.<sup>2</sup> an issue which is not dominant in the hegemonic bloc or popular front strategies. In the latter approach forces come together because of some common purpose which, in the case of the Popular Front of the 1930s, was the defeat of Fascism. An alliance is mainly between individual social forces, a coalition between political parties, political personalities and organisations. Hobsbawm's analysis should be seen primarily as a call for a Popular Front strategy.<sup>3</sup> Coalition policies between the Labour Party and other centre-left parties is seen as a last resort in case Labour were not be able to deliver the struggle for power by itself.<sup>4</sup> The alliance was to be between the other forces in the political spectrum (e.g., the feminist movement, racial minorities, etc.), and the labour movement. In the British case the debate on coalition should be seen as one between institutionalised political forces like the Labour Party on the one hand and the Social Democratic Party or the then Alliance on the other. A critique of the coalition strategy came from Raymond Williams, a plea for a Popular Front style strategies from Ben Pimlott. Raymond Williams argued that coalitions mean abandoning the struggle to transform ideas and views and push

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 226, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>Ideological identification is not always necessary in coalition practical politics as examples of coalition governments constantly remind us, as does the debate on the Italian road to socialism *via* Berlinguer's advocacy of a "historic compromise", that is, of the Communists forming a government with bourgeois parties.

<sup>3</sup>See Eric Hobsbawm, "The Retreat into Extremism", *Marxism Today*, April 1985, pp.11-12.

<sup>4</sup>See Eric Hobsbawm, "Out of the Wilderness", *op. cit.*, p. 17 and also in his "Snatching Victory from Defeat", *Marxism Today*, May 1987, where Hobsbawm argues the case for tactical voting.

Labour into accommodating the popular ground on which it has no success. Pimlott was against an electoral arrangement with other parties (mainly the then Alliance) because the benefits would prove more fruitful for them than for the Labour Party who would have to dilute its socialism to match the former's centrist positions.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. 2. THE CRISIS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

The debate on the crisis of the labour movement is practically related to that on the left interpretations of "Thatcherism" and the crisis of social democracy, or Labourism in the British case. "Thatcherism" is seen both as a new hegemonic project on the right and as the outcome of the failures of social democracy, British style, to manage the economy alongside the incapacity of the labour movement -despite its growing militancy- to impose its own solution to the crisis.<sup>2</sup>

Among those arguing that "Thatcherism" should be seen in the above terms is Stuart Hall whose influence in the first New Left was already discussed. Stuart Hall's writings were chosen because of their broad influence on the Communist Party of Great Britain (re)thinking. In *Policing the Crisis Mugging, The State and Law and Order* (1978) Hall's essay on "The Law-and-Order Society: Towards the 'Exceptional State'" was an attempt to explain the origins of the emerging Thatcherism and its ideological road to power.

By "crisis" Hall understood a break in the social relations and institutions which bind society together and enable it to maintain and reproduce itself on the same basis as before. Hall defined "the British crisis" as follows:

First, it is a crisis of and for British capitalism: the crisis, especially of *an advanced industrial capitalist nation*, seeking to stabilise itself in rapidly changing global and national conditions on an extremely weak post-imperial economic base. It has become, progressively, also an aspect of the general economic recession of the capitalist system on a world scale...Second, then, it is *a crisis of the relations of "social forces"* engendered by this deep rupture at the economic level -a crisis in the political class struggle and in the political apparatuses...it has been experienced as a crisis of "Party", i. e. of both the ruling-class and the working-class parties...Third, then, it has been *a crisis of the state*...Fourth, it is *a crisis in political legitimacy, in social authority*, in

<sup>1</sup>See James Curran (ed) *The Future of the Left*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1984.

<sup>2</sup>Most of the *Marxism Today* writers argued that Thatcherism was a response to the long-term organic decline of the British economy and the collapse of the social democratic consensus, see Martin Jacques, "Breaking out of the Impasse", *Marxism Today*, October 1979, pp. 6-15; Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques (eds), *The Politics of Thatcherism*, Lawrence & Wishart in association with *Marxism Today*, London, 1983.

*hegemony, and in the forms of class struggle and resistance.* This crucially touches the questions of consent and of coercion...<sup>1</sup>

Hall discusses the concept of crisis within the framework of crisis of authority, the crisis of hegemony or general crisis of the State which obtains predominantly at the cultural-ideological level. Hall starts from the presupposition of social democracy as the normal form of state in advanced European capitalist societies and of authoritarian-populist régimes as exceptional forms corresponding to acute economic crisis. The social democratic system is seen as embodying consensus politics and welfarism. The crisis of this system is understood in the context of Britain's relative economic decline and the failure of successive governments -Labour and Tory alike- to reverse it.<sup>2</sup> According to Hall post-war capitalism and the model of the "affluent society" has been based upon an extremely weak and vulnerable industrial and economic base. The political crisis then is seen as the result of this trend and especially the inability of Labourism to deliver welfare goods using the vehicle of the Keynesian Welfare State. Labourism instead of administering a supposed post-war consensus ended up by managing dissensus produced by a mounting discontent leading to a legitimisation crisis.

For Hall the crisis of the party system, that is of both the ruling and the opposition parties is a manifestation of a crisis of representation. The underlying political forces could no longer be accommodated into the fast changing socio-political structures of the system. Another aspect of the crisis of the state apparatus was manifested in the growing state intervention in the economy which for Hall was a sign of a more open class conflict between the fundamental classes having, in turn, an impact on the ideological organisation of consent. All these aspects of the crisis were analysed in terms of a crisis of hegemony. The Left was unable to gain hegemony at the cultural and ideological level of society with the result of leaving the space open to authoritarian populist solutions. People's failing aspirations and growing disappointment with Labour's bureaucratic welfarism was captured by the Right and turned against this distinctive form of liberal-corporatism.<sup>3</sup> "Powellism" in the 1960s addressed these fears and its descendant, "Thatcherism", in the 1980s was set off to

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<sup>1</sup>Stuart Hall, "The Law-and-Order Society, Towards the Exceptional State", in Stuart Hall *et al*, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, The State and Law and Order*, Macmillan Press, London, 1978, rep. 1979, pp. 317-319, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of Britain's decline as a world power, see Andrew Gamble, *Britain in Decline*, Macmillan Press, London, 1981 (1985, 2nd revised edition).

<sup>3</sup>Liberal-corporatism as opposed to statist-corporatism usually attributed to fascism.



construct a new alternative to the Labourist model in the form of an authoritarian populist individualism. As Hall put it:

The shift in the internal balance of hegemony -consent to coercion -is a response, within the state, to increasing polarisation of class forces (real and imagined). It is exactly how a "crisis of hegemony" expresses itself.<sup>1</sup>

Hall places great emphasis on the role of ideology<sup>2</sup> in organising hegemony and popular politics. His understanding of ideology refers back to a particular interpretation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony.<sup>3</sup> Hall argued that:

Ideology is an inflation or misrepresentation of real relations, a displacement of the class struggle, not myths conjured up out of fairy stories. The ideology of the crisis which leads to and supports and finally finds its fulfilment in a "law -and- order" society, refers to a real crisis not a phony one. It is then, finally, a crisis in and of ideology.<sup>4</sup>

The way Hall uses the concept of ideology differs from a classical Marxist conceptualisation. In itself the classical Marxist concept of ideology comes in at the end of a process of theoretical conceptions which tried to analyse problems of social determination of attitudes and beliefs. The term ideology was coined by Destutt de Tracy in 1797.<sup>5</sup> In his *Elements d' Ideologie*, written between 1801 and 1815, de Tracy proposed a new science of ideas, which would be the ground of all other sciences. This science of ideas was called "idéologie". For the philosophers of this

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<sup>1</sup>Stuart Hall, "The Law-and-Order Society, Towards the Exceptional State", op. cit., p. 320.

<sup>2</sup>For Hall's understanding of ideology see "Variants of Liberalism" in *Politics and Ideology, a Reader*, edited by James Donald and Stuart Hall, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, pp. 34-69 and also Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *On Ideology*, Birmingham University Press, Birmingham, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>For the concept of "hegemony" and its use in Gramsci, see Robert Bocock, *Hegemony*, Tavistock, London, 1977; Chantal Mouffe (ed) *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979; Joseph Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1981; Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci", *New Left Review*, no 100, 1976/77; C. Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1981; John Hoffman, *The Gramscian Challenge: Coercion and Consent in Marxist Political Theory*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1984.

<sup>4</sup>Stuart Hall, "The Law-and-Order Society, Towards the Exceptional State", op. cit., p. 322.

<sup>5</sup>For a short introduction to the history of the concept and its usage see David McLellan, *Ideology*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1986; see also, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *On Ideology*, Birmingham University Press, Birmingham, 1977.

School of thought there is one science of ideas, that is, of abstract concepts, which studies their emergence and is capable of reconstructing them as a whole by setting out from the analysis of the senses. This School experienced considerable influence in France at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. The term ideology was used by Marx with a different meaning. Ideologies for Marx were systems of ideas, beliefs, and understandings. "Alienated Reason" is the term that Lefebvre<sup>1</sup> uses to describe ideology; for Lukács<sup>2</sup> ideology represented a "false consciousness", for Ossowski<sup>3</sup> it sounded like a "coiling cry". According to classical Marxism ideologies are products of the mode of production and the division of society into antagonistic classes. Marx writes in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that:

Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The entire class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations. The single individual, who derives them through tradition and upbringing, may imagine that they form the real motives and the starting point of his activity.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of ideology in Marx can be traced from *The German Ideology*, where ideologies were seen as systems of ideas and beliefs that help to legitimate and justify the positions and interests of the classes in the socio-political formation, to his later works, like *Capital*, where Marx broadened the concept to include all the superstructural ideologically motivated expressions of the mode of production, that is, language, ethics, law, government and every product of mind and consciousness. What Marx did not change throughout all his works is the idea that ideologies reflect class structures and camouflage them. The problem of ideology has an immediate relevance to the problem of the truth of knowledge which in practical terms means the problem of the knowability of the world at every given moment and, beyond that, the ability of the subject to understand it and change it. Marx in his latter works abandons the idea that ideologies belong to the sphere of myths. He distinguished between ideology and illusion and argued that if ideologies were based on "praxis", that is conscious human activity, then they were real. The end of ideology was only possible

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<sup>1</sup>See Henri Lefebvre, *The Sociology of Marx*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>See Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, Merlin Press, London, 1971.

<sup>3</sup>See Stanislaw Ossowski, *Class Structure in the Social Consciousness*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963.

<sup>4</sup>Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1977, p. 37.

in the sense that ideology could cease to be a particular cover of reality in the interests of the ruling class and instead became the universal principle of emancipation and a material force in the hands of the working class. The working class ideology was not considered to be an ideology in the form of an illusion as with the dominant one but as belonging to the realm of the real precisely because it carried with it the element of universality. Emancipatory praxis can only be realised through penetrating the veil of ideology but ideology cannot exist without the subjects and through them.

Hall does not follow Marx's definition of ideology although he is using a Marxist language. He is far from seeing ideology as a mystified reflection of the relations generated through the production process. On the contrary by giving predominance to ideological struggle he under-emphasizes the material element in it. Ideologies are not misrepresentations or inflations of real relations, as Hall claims, but represent real relations which are themselves fetishised. By asking for politics to be conducted ideologically he seems to dismiss the mystified aspect of ideology and also the circumstance that the dominant ideology is the ideology of the dominant class in the social formation.<sup>1</sup> Hall's understanding of ideological relations refers back to the Eurocommunist and structuralist discourse of ideological state apparatuses as open arenas of ideological struggle.<sup>2</sup> Hall's analysis of "Thatcherism" as "authoritarian populism", owes much to his understanding of ideology as the supreme terrain of struggle.

#### IV. 3. LEFT INTERPRETATIONS OF "THATCHERISM"

##### IV. 3. (i). "Authoritarian-Populism"

Paradoxically the 1979 Labour electoral defeat strengthened the position of the left-wingers in the Labour Party. According to the Left's analysis the technocratic, class neutral ideology of the Wilson administration<sup>3</sup> and the revisionist Croslandite apotheosis of the 1950s and early 1960s were to be blamed for the Conservative victory. What was needed was socialism in the form of the workers' control of the

<sup>1</sup>See Stuart Hall, "Thatcher's Lessons", *Marxism Today*, March 1988, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., for the Eurocommunist and also structuralist approach Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship, The Third International and the Problem of Fascism*, Verso, London, 1979; Fernando Claudin, *Eurocommunism and Socialism*, New Left Books, London, 1979; Santiago Carrillo, *'Eurocommunism' and the State*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>For an account of the Wilson administration from a New Left standpoint, see Perry Anderson, "Critique of Wilsonism", *New Left Review*, no 27, 1964; Perry Anderson, "Origins of the Present Crisis", *New Left Review*, no 23, 1964; Tom Nairn, "Anatomy of the Labour Party", *New Left Review*, no 27, 1964, and no 28, 1964.

labour process and not their integration through participation in the system as with the corporatist strategies of the *Social Contract*.<sup>1</sup>

The most influential exegeses of the underlying causes, nature and consequences of "Thatcherism" appeared in the journal of the Communist Party of Great Britain, *Marxism Today*, in the pro-Labour magazine *New Socialist* and also in the *New Left Review*.

Hall was one of the most prominent figures of the "old" New Left who took part in the debate on "Thatcherism". Hall, embarking from an analysis of the crisis of social democracy as the background of "Thatcherism", goes on to explain the phenomenon itself but only in its cultural/ideological appearance. For Hall "Thatcherism" represents a *new hegemonic project*. This project was built on the twin pillars of authoritarianism and populism hence the contradictory term he uses to describe it: "*authoritarian populism*". According to Hall "Thatcherism" is an exceptional form of state.<sup>2</sup>

Hall's essay "The Great Moving Right Show" (1979) opened the debate on the New Right advance in Britain and the crisis of social democracy. Hall argued that: "'the swing to the Right' is not a reflection of the crisis: it is itself a *response* to the crisis".<sup>3</sup> To him the crisis was not only economic but mainly ideological and political. Contrary to the New Right the Left was unable to win the battle for ideas. "Thatcherism" was successful in pointing out the weakness of Labourism and on deploying the discourse of "nation" and "people" -those same "people" who had been divided by a creeping Labour Party socialism through the development of the Keynesian Welfare State- against "class" and "unions" by calling for "Law and Order" -more policing, tougher sentencing, stricter family and societal discipline, the celebrated return to Victorian moral values and the need for an authority to carry this programme out. Hall explained "Thatcherism" as a move toward "*Authoritarian Populism*",<sup>4</sup> that is:

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<sup>1</sup>See the policies and ideas drafted in the document: *Economic Policy and the Cost of Living*, (*The Social Contract*), TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee, February 1973, and promised to be implemented in practice after a Labour Party electoral victory; see also Stephen Bornstein *et al*, *The State in Capitalist Europe, A Casebook*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1984.

<sup>2</sup>Stuart Hall, "The Great Moving Right Show", *Marxism Today*, January 1979, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15, emphasis in the original.

<sup>4</sup>Stuart Hall elaborated further on the concept of "authoritarian populism" in his contribution to Alan Hunt (ed), *Marxism and Democracy*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1980 with an essay entitled "Popular Democratic vs Authoritarian Populism: Two ways of 'Taking Democracy Seriously'", pp. 156-185.



...an *exceptional form of the capitalist state* -which unlike classical fascism, had retained most (though not all) of the formal representative institutions in place, and which at the same time has been able to construct around itself an *active popular consent*.<sup>1</sup>

According to Hall this form of state is "authoritarian" because it relies on the performance of a strong government -which confronts the "unrealistic" demands of the trade unions for example- and it is populist because it tries to appeal to the "people" as if they were a homogeneous totality: a good example from the recent past is the Falklands/Malvinas War and the psychological interpellation of British subjects as the participants of the Great British Empire, "the Enemy" ("them") as opposed to "Us".<sup>2</sup> Following a neo-Gramscian problematic, Hall analysed "Thatcherism" as a "*passive revolution*" that is a social transformation which occurs without mass mobilization because it results from a gradual accumulation of small "molecular" changes and/or because it is organized from above.<sup>3</sup>

The remedy suggested by Hall to the Left was to put forward their own hegemonic discourse by constructing an alliance, a hegemonic bloc which was more likely to succeed since there was no single united working class or an inherent majority for socialism to be addressed as Hall argued in his article "Thatcherism -a new stage?"<sup>4</sup>. His call was for an alternative ideology and policy for the Left to counterpose to the social philosophy of Thatcherism, the latter being seen as constituted from an articulation of organic national patriotism, religion of the free market, competitive individualism in economic matters and an authoritarian state in social and political affairs. As Hall put it:

[the Labour Party] can neither win elections nor lead the country into the next decade as the party of disadvantaged minorities alone. They have to become part of a wider popular strategy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Stuart Hall, "The Great Moving Right Show", op. cit., p. 15, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>See the contributions to the debate on "Thatcherism", in *The Politics of Thatcherism*, edited by Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques, Lawrence & Wishart in association with *Marxism Today*, London, 1983; for an analysis of the "Falklands factor", see Eric Hobsbawm, "Falklands Fallout" and Robert Gray, "The Falklands Factor", both in the above mentioned volume, pp. 257-280.

<sup>3</sup>For the concept of "passive revolution" in Gramsci's thought, see "Notes on Italian History", pp.106-114, in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1986.

<sup>4</sup>See Stuart Hall, "Thatcherism -a new stage?", *Marxism Today*, February 1980.

<sup>5</sup>Stuart Hall, "The Crisis of Labourism", in *The Future of the Left*, op. cit., p. 28.

Although Hall's analytical framework is primarily of a neo-Gramscian origin it was also influenced by the work of Nicos Poulantzas and the French Structuralist School.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that Hall had criticized Althusser's problematic in his earlier works he maintained a positive attitude towards Poulantzas's work on fascism, the idea of exceptional and normal capitalist state forms and especially the concept of "authoritarian statism".<sup>2</sup> Poulantzas's concept of "authoritarian statism" was an attempt to explain the continuous decline of representative democracy in the classical liberal sense, of the rise of a new phase of the state but without identifying it with a specific regime. The term emerged in Part Four ("The Decline of Democracy: Authoritarian Statism") of Nicos Poulantzas's book *State, Power, Socialism* (1978).<sup>3</sup> In the latter -and also his last book- Poulantzas attempted to analyse the move towards an *intensive étatisme*. This *étatisme* has been characterized by:

...intensified state control over every sphere of socio-economic life, combined with radical decline of the institutions of political democracy and with draconian and multiform curtailment of so-called 'formal' liberties, whose reality is being discovered now that they are going overboard.<sup>4</sup>

This new form of state was linked with "the periodization of capitalism into distinct stages and phases"; with the view that it existed "in the form of régimes that vary according to the conjuncture of the country concerned"; that it covered specifically, both "the political crisis and the crisis of the state"; that it was intended to help us periodize "the relationship between the state and the political crisis".<sup>5</sup> Poulantzas in an interview in *Marxism Today* (July 1979) defined "authoritarian statism" as "a new phase of the state" but "without identifying it with a specific régime".<sup>6</sup> As Poulantzas put it:

So when I speak of "authoritarian statism" it does not mean that political democracy or representative democracy is going to end. "Authoritarian statism" can take extremely different forms. It can take neo-liberal forms as in France, or it can take a much more authoritarian form as in Germany.

<sup>1</sup>Predominantly the work of Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas.

<sup>2</sup>See Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *On Ideology*, Hutchinson, London, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>See Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, translated by Patrick Camiller, Verso, London 1980 (this translation first published, NLB, 1978, first published in French as *L'État, le Pouvoir, le Socialisme*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1978).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 203, emphasis in the original.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>6</sup>See Nicos Poulantzas, "Interview", in *Marxism Today*, July 1979, p. 199.

Nevertheless we are witnessing a decline of representative democracy in the classical sense without implying that there is a trend towards fascism. I tried therefore to distinguish between "authoritarian statism" and "fascism".<sup>1</sup>

Although Hall's concept of "authoritarian populism" was borrowed from Poulantzas's conceptualisation of "authoritarian statism" and Laclau's analysis of "populism"<sup>2</sup> his formulation of it retains a degree of eclecticism. When Poulantzas discussed the tendency of the modern state to become more authoritarian and sutured he placed this tendency in the context of state monopoly capitalism political practices in advanced capitalist countries. "Authoritarian Statism" was not an exceptional form of state like Fascism. For Poulantzas -at least in his early works- Bonapartism was seen as a normal form of all capitalist states. As Poulantzas claimed:

Authoritarian statism hardly leaves parties with any choice: either they must subordinate themselves to the administration, or else they must give up access to it. Citizens are obliged to face the administration head-on, and it is not surprising that, beyond their participation in elections, they are generally disaffected with parties that are supposed to represent them in the state administration. We know only too well that, besides the considerable restriction of democratic liberties already incurred, *this situation lays the ground for a possible evolution of power towards Bonapartism.*<sup>3</sup>

There is an element of contradiction in Hall's analysis in relation to Poulantzas' analysis of the advanced capitalist state's tendencies towards "authoritarianism". Although Hall adopts Poulantzas' theoretical formulations it seems to overlook the premises of the theoretical framework of Poulantzas' conceptualisations.

On the other hand, Laclau's concept of "populism"<sup>4</sup> and of the "popular-democratic" interpellation was an attempt to analyse by using the insights of discourse analysis (and Lacan's psychoanalysis) the way the régimes of the advancing capitalist "banana democracies" of Latin America gain legitimacy and support; it was also intended as a critique of Poulantzas's analysis of Fascism. The term "populism" to Laclau signifies the ideological discourse of mass integration, the interpellation of different class discourses into a dominant discourse through a creative rupture of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>See Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism-Fascism-Populism*, New Left Books, London, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, op. cit., p. 23, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup>On the concept of "populism" see Nicos Mouzelis, "On the Concept of Populism: Populist and Clientelist Modes of Incorporation in Semiperipheral Politics", *Politics and Society*, vol. 14, no 3, 1985.

various interests and the interpellation -through addressing- of class members as people who belong to the same entity, i.e., the state, the nation, the good citizens. This was the articulation of different discourses under a populist interpellation which aims to incorporate the weakest ones. This kind of interpellation does not refer to classes but it is on the contrary popular-democratic precisely because it does not address a class but an imaginary homogeneous totality, an impersonal mass unity consisting of differential elements whose articulation takes place through a "system of discourse" as a means for the disarticulation and neutralization of the contradictory ideologies and through their reduction to a dominant discourse which takes the place of a hegemonic ideology. This popular-democratic interpellation has no class content but is the battlefield of various ideological struggles.<sup>1</sup>

What Laclau wanted to stress was the predominance of a '*plural subject*' as opposed to the Marxist 'unified subject' of change. Subjects were articulated, that is constructed, through a discourse of articulation/disarticulation and through their interpellation, that is, the ideological expressions at any given moment which construct and deconstruct them *ad infinitum*. These social identities gained a more privileged position *vis-à-vis* the construction of subjects either as 'bearers of structures' (*Träger*) or as composed on the basis of materialist class interests. The national-popular or popular democratic interpellation was according to Laclau without a specific class-belonging because the people were addressed not in class terms, thus according to their objective position in the relations of production, but as atoms/monads according to their subjective identities which meant in the last analysis that people's politics belong to a different sphere from class politics. Laclau's theory emphasized the autonomy of the political at the expense of the economic base.<sup>2</sup> Hall's analysis of "Thatcherism" has been influenced to a great extent by this kind of approach that dismisses any idea of economic determination and class politics placing instead the emphasis on the construction of subjects through discourse. "Thatcherism" is seen by

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<sup>1</sup>See Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism-Fascism-Populism*, New Left Books, London, 1977.

<sup>2</sup>For Laclau's attack on "classism" that is class politics see especially: Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, "Socialist Strategy - Where Next?", *Marxism Today*, January 1981; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, London, 1981; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, "Post-Marxism without Apologies", *New Left Review*, no 166, 1987; Ernesto Laclau, "Class War and After", *Marxism Today*, April 1987; Ernesto Laclau, "Coming Up For Air", *Marxism Today*, March 1990; for a critique of Laclau's and Mouffe's positions, see Nicos Mouzelis, "Marxism or Post-Marxism?", *New Left Review*, no 167, 1988; Norman Geras, "Ex-Marxism Without Substance: Being a Real Reply to Laclau and Mouffe", *New Left Review*, no 169, 1988; Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989.



Hall in terms of a hegemonic project aiming at creating a new conservative consensus. The latter is seen as articulated through the construction of subjects which cut across class lines.

#### IV. 3. (ii). "Two-Nations" Project

Hall's analysis of "Thatcherism" was criticised by amongst others Bob Jessop *et al*<sup>1</sup> who argued that although "Thatcherism" is an authoritarian form of government this does not equate it with an exceptional form of state like Fascism. On the contrary it was a normal response of a capitalist state under conditions of a crisis of economic management which threatened the capitalist accumulation process. Jessop *et al* mainly criticized Hall's approach for putting too much weight on the ideological level, neglecting the economic, and for over-emphasizing the coherence and hegemony of "Thatcherism".

They argued that "Thatcherite" ideology was not entirely one of populism because although it referred to the people it made a distinction between them in terms of *productive/parasitic*. This separation marked a departure from the traditional "One Nation"<sup>2</sup> Tory populism towards the New Right "Two Nations" one.

In Jessop's *et al* words the "Two Nations" ideology meant that:

Increasingly Tory populism is taking the form of a unification of a privileged nation of "good citizens" and "hard workers" against a contained and subordinate nation which extends beyond the inner cities and their ethnic minorities to include much of the non-skilled working class outside the South-East. In this sense we believe that Thatcherism can fruitfully be seen as a "two nations" project.<sup>3</sup>

Jessop *et al* argued that if "Thatcherism" was seen as a "two-nations" hegemonic project then this would allow more space for the analysis of the links between *the politics of electoral support* and *the politics of power* and for further consideration of the contradictions and tensions between them. As Jessop *et al* put it:

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<sup>1</sup>See Bob Jessop *et al*, "Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations and Thatcherism", *New Left Review*, no 147, 1984.

<sup>2</sup>Disraeli was the primary exponent of this idea. "One Nation" was the policy of the Conservative Party, the party of the 'Middle-Way' between socialism and *laissez-faire* capitalism. The role of the Tory party was to represent the legitimate interests of the society and preserve its continuity. See Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State*, Macmillan, London, 1988, ch. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Bob Jessop *et al*, "Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations and Thatcherism", *op. cit.*, p. 50, emphasis added.

By focusing on the productive/parasitic distinction, we can relate Thatcherite discourse to the nature and limits of economic strategy. For this approach suggests that future support depends on the effectiveness of the government's accumulation strategy and political programme. In turn this points us toward the international constraints on Thatcherism and qualifies the tendency for an AP approach to focus exclusively on the domestic ideological struggle. The ability to predict certain ruptures or breakpoints in the economic development of Thatcherism will help the Left in formulating an adequate strategy.<sup>1</sup>

The authors criticized Hall's approach as pessimistic because, as they put it, "The main danger of the 'Authoritarian Populism' approach is that it generates inadequate strategic conclusions. At the level of left strategy such an appraisal leads to deep pessimism ('Battening down the hatches') or to calls for a long-term construction of an "alternative vision".<sup>2</sup> Both responses (according to them) left the way open to "purely defensive, short-term, and uncoordinated resistance to Thatcherism at the expense of any coherent, positive, medium-term economic and political strategy."<sup>3</sup>

Although Jessop *et al* argued against the concept they did not seem to give it up altogether. Jessop *et al* claimed that the proper scope of "Authoritarian Populism" as they interpreted it could help an analysis of some areas of Thatcherism's politics such as electoral ideologies, the governmental programme and so on.

But Jessop's *et al* analysis did not derive the "Two Nations" society from the point of production where the "core worker" and the "peripheral worker" distinction is already present; the former has privileges and a relative security in terms of employment, the latter always faces various discriminations and most of all lack of security in terms of employment. This "peripheral" workforce of our times is part of what Marx called the "reserve army of industry".

Jessop's *et al* distinction between productive and parasitic leaves aside any account of the differentiation between employed/unemployed. A "Parasite" can be one who is employed but not productive so this "two nations discourse" is nothing existing in reality; neither is it an ideological cover nor an abstraction.

"Thatcherism" builds on the already existing divisions within the society of the two thirds (2/3). Separations are present between employed and unemployed, between "core" and "peripheral" workforce, between North and South (in terms of prosperity), between the "decent" society and the outcasts, divisions already criticized not only from the opposition parties but also from members of the Tory Party. The then (1987) Energy Secretary, Peter Walker, advised his party to return to the healing tradition of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

Lord Stockton, the former Tory Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. Mr Walker stated that:

His (Macmillan) third purpose was to unite our own nation and to make sure that we did not suffer from two nations, one employed and one unemployed, a prosperous South and a poor North. As the political parties prepare themselves for the next election, the electorate should recognise that these are still the great purposes of modern politics. They are purposes that in my judgment can only be fulfilled by the Tory Party.<sup>1</sup>

Similar ideas have been shared and expressed by members of the Labour Party too. As the late Eric Heffer, a well known left-winger and Labour MP, put it in 1987:

Britain under Mrs Thatcher is rapidly moving into a chaotic society where order and prosperity for all have steadily become things of the past. She has turned her political guns against sections of her own people, for instance trade-unionists who, to her, are the "enemy within" <sup>2</sup>

Apart from the above objections to Jessop's *et al* analysis there are others concerning his disagreement with Hall's analysis. Jessop *et al* agreed with Hall that:

...the political and ideological context of Thatcherism is the revolt of the petty bourgeoisie, small and medium capital, and even sectors of the working class against the economic and social impact of the Keynesian Welfare State. It also operates (Thatcherism) in the context of the "dual crisis" (in the spheres of parliamentary representation and corporatist (or functional) representation)...Yet without suitable forms of "democratic" consultation and/or regulation corresponding to different spheres and forms of state intervention, the effectiveness of state policies is undermined and their legitimacy is questioned.<sup>3</sup>

But on the whole the debate between Hall and Jessop *et al* pertained more to language and particular focus than substantive incompatibilities. Jessop's *et al* objections to Hall's analysis were mostly concerned with Hall's placing the emphasis on the cultural and ideological aspects of "Thatcherism", neglecting the economic and political aspects; they had less to do with a deep disagreement with the analysis *per se*. On the one hand Hall (in terms of strategy) tried to show the necessity of class alliances because the working class no longer constituted -according to him- the majority of the population. Hall was questioning the very idea of the existence of a

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Walker, "Walker's 'two-nations' warning", *The Guardian*, 2/1/1987.

<sup>2</sup>Eric Heffer in *The Guardian*, 2/1/1987.

<sup>3</sup>Bob Jessop *et al*, "Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations and Thatcherism", *op. cit.*, p. 44.

fundamental class capable of gaining an overall control of the civil and political society. What Hall saw as possible was the articulation of different identities to form a hegemonic bloc by counterpoising their cultural and ideological discourse to the dominant but not yet hegemonic Thatcherite bloc. On the other hand Jessop *et al* viewed the dissatisfied elements (they did not refer to the working class in particular) of society as potential unified subjects against established "Thatcherism". These dissatisfied elements of society spread themselves among all the classes, even sections of the bourgeoisie itself. Jessop's *et al* demand was not for a long term strategy; on the contrary, by accusing Hall's analysis of the lack of a short term one they pointed towards "a coherent, positive, medium-term economic and political strategy"<sup>1</sup> instead of a long-term construction of an "alternative vision" (Hall). Hall's reply to Jessop *et al* was an attempt to defend the concept of "Authoritarian Populism" on the one hand and to show that in reality there were no real differences between him and his critics other than in the placing of emphasis.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV. 3. (iii). "Totalitarian Liberalism"

The other debate related to "Thatcherism" but also to Gramsci and the French Regulation School is the debate on "Fordism" and "Post" or "Neo-Fordism" which has taken in Britain a post structuralist form but, as always happens with every "post", inherited some of the qualities of its ancestors blended with a neo-Gramscian analysis. Gramsci's essay on "Americanism and Fordism"<sup>3</sup> certainly influenced some of the debates of the Left in Britain especially those linked with the Communist Party of Great Britain and its analysis of the changing face of society.

Gramsci asked himself if the changes taking place in the production process were of such importance as to constitute the beginning of a new historical epoch, or if they were merely a conjunction of events of no lasting significance. He regarded "Americanism" as a new stage in the historical development of the capitalist state in the era of monopoly capitalism. As he put it:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>2</sup>See Stuart Hall, "Authoritarian Populism: A Reply to Jessop *et al*", *New Left Review*, no 151, 1985, reprinted in Jessop *et al*, *Thatcherism: A Tale of Two Nations*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989.

<sup>3</sup>See Antonio Gramsci's essay on "Americanism and Fordism" in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence and Wishart, London, (1971) rep. 1986, pp. 279-318.



Americanisation requires a particular environment, a particular social structure (or at least a determined intention to create it) and a certain type of State. This State is the liberal State, not in the sense of free trade liberalism or of effective political liberty, but in the more fundamental sense of free initiative and of economic individualism which, with its own means, on the level of "civil society", through historical development, itself arrives at a regime of industrial concentration and monopoly.<sup>1</sup>

Fordism was seen not only as an economic but also as an ideological and political complex of relations having as their basis a new mode of working class exploitation by capital. This new model of production organisation which was based on higher wages and monotonous labour had as its apparent aim the organisation of hegemony into the factory but in the last analysis it was about the overall organisation of society.

Recall here the experiments conducted by Ford and to the economies made by his firm through direct management of transport and distribution of the product. These economies affected production costs and permitted higher wages and lower selling prices. Since these preliminary conditions existed, already rendered rational by historical evolution, it was relatively easy to rationalise production and labour by a skilful combination of force (destruction of working-class trade unionism on a territorial basis) and persuasion (high wages, various social benefits, extremely subtle ideological and political propaganda) and thus succeeded in making the whole life of the nation revolve around production. *Hegemony here is born in the factory* and requires for its exercise only a minute quantity of professional political and ideological intermediaries.<sup>2</sup>

The role of ideology is stressed in Gramsci's work:

Adaptation to the new methods of production and work cannot take place simply through social compulsion.<sup>3</sup>

Gramsci's theory of ideology kept only the positive side of Lenin's and Lukács' use of the concept. To Gramsci, to separate ideology from the structure was an error which led to reductionism. He enumerated the steps leading to this situation as follows:

1. ideology is identified as distinct from the structure, and it is asserted that it is not ideology that changes the structures but vice versa;
2. it is asserted that a given political solution is "ideological" – i.e. that it is not sufficient to change the structure although it thinks that it can do so; it is asserted that it is useless, stupid, etc.;

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, op. cit., p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 285, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 310.

3. one then passes to the assertion that every ideology is "pure" appearance, useless, stupid, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The result of this process, evident in the work of Engels and Bukharin, was that:

The bad sense of the word has become widespread, with the effect that the theoretical analysis of the concept of ideology has been modified and denatured.<sup>2</sup>

Gramsci made a distinction between "historically organic ideologies" on the one hand and "arbitrary, rationalistic or 'willed'" on the other hand. The former are those necessary to a given structure and have a psychological validity. Historically organic ideologies "'organise' human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position and struggle, etc."<sup>3</sup>

Gramsci's viewing of ideology not only as philosophy but also as "common sense" and consequently as having a psychological element in it that leads to a voluntarily acceptance of the dominant system is one of the favourite elements of the Eurocommunists' discourse.

Nevertheless, Gramsci did not see "Americanism" as something qualitatively different in the nature of the state. According to Gramsci the capitalist state might have entered a new epoch in a quantitative manner but its class nature remained unchanged. Americanism as a form of organisation is still within the capitalist accumulation requirements.

In the case of Americanism, understood not only as a form of cafe life but as an ideology of the kind represented by Rotary Clubs, we are not dealing with a new type of civilization. This is shown by the fact that nothing has been changed in the character of and the relationships between fundamental groups. What we are dealing with is an organic extension and an intensification of European civilization, which has simply acquired a new coating in the American climate.<sup>4</sup>

Gramsci's observations on the changing face of the organisation of the relations of production have been taken up by the Eurocommunist Left in Britain -who stress the axiomatic-ideological side- and from another structuralist perspective by the French Regulation School. The latter's understanding of the concept of Fordism -as a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 376-7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 376.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

political-economic phenomenon- and its interpretation of societal changes will now be discussed.

The discussion on the *Fordist Security State*<sup>1</sup> is related to the views expressed in the writings of Michel Aglietta and their interpretation in the debates in Britain.<sup>2</sup>

The debate on Fordism and the transition to a new phase of capitalist development enter the Left's private lexicon in the years after the emergence of "Thatcherism" into power and the repetitious and unsuccessful attempts of the Labour Party to regain office. The analysis of Fordism is related chiefly to the writings of a Left of a neo-Gramscian origin, predominantly Stuart Hall and the writers around the Communist Party of Great Britain's journal *Marxism Today*.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis of "Thatcherism" at the economic level is linked with the belief not only in the transition to a new phase of capitalism but also with the certainty of being in a new era which- and this is the most important point- is here to stay. Taking as a paradigm the introduction of new technology and working practices in the most advanced and fast developing companies like electronics and micros, the creation of a flexible workforce and a dual labour market they concluded that society is entering the era of post-fordism. But what is Fordism? As Bob Jessop argued it is:

a new system of capitalist production, which made it possible for the Keynesian welfare state to survive as the political shell and organising myth of the post-war settlement. Fordism -named after Henry Ford, its foremost pioneer- created an economic expansion based on mass production and mass consumption.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Joachim Hirsch, "The Fordist Security State and New Social Movements", *Kapitalistate*, no 10/11, 1983 and also Joachim Hirsch and Josef Esser, "Der CDU-Staat: Ein politisches Regulierungsmodell für den »nachfordistischen« Kapitalismus", *Prokla*, no 56, 1984, Berlin.

<sup>2</sup>See on the concept of "Fordism": Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: the US Experience*, NLB, London, 1979, a very thorough review of this book is written by Mike Davis: "'Fordism' in Crisis: a Review of Michel Aglietta's *Régulation et crises: l'expérience des Etats-Unis*", *Review*, II, 2, Fall, 1978; Michel DeVroey, "A Regulation Approach Interpretation of Contemporary Crisis", *Capital & Class*, no 23, Summer 1984; Alain Lipietz, "Towards Global Fordism", *New Left Review*, no 132, 1982; on the emergence of the term "Fordism" and the philosophy behind it, see Antonio Gramsci's essay on "Americanism and Fordism", op. cit., and also Huw Beynon *Working for Ford*, Allen Lane, Penguin, London, 1973.

<sup>3</sup>See Stuart Hall, "Realignment for What?", *Marxism Today*, December 1985; Stuart Hall, "Brave New World", *Marxism Today*, October 1988; Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds) *New Times, The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1989; Robin Murray's discussion of "flexible specialisation" and fordism: "Benetton Britain, The New Economic Order", *Marxism Today*, July 1985; Robin Murray, "Life After Henry (Ford)", *Marxism Today*, October 1988 and also the special issue of *Marxism Today* on post-Fordism in October 1988.

<sup>4</sup>Bob Jessop, "Thatcherism's Mid-Life Crisis", *New Socialist*, March 1986, p. 12.

The key features of Fordism include: mass production on a moving assembly line operated by the semi-skilled mass worker, a varying mix of individual and or social wages to satisfy workers' needs "from the cradle to the grave", growing consumption of standardised mass commodities within nuclear family households and expanding collective goods and services provided by the state; and state management of the conflicts between capital and labour, over both the individual and the social wage. These features are clearly related to the rise of Keynesian economic management and the semi-universal welfare state.<sup>1</sup>

But this model of the state suffers from a serious difficulty which might mean the end of the welfare security state and the rise of the neo-fordist phase of capitalism. The problem confronting us is how one can interpret this crisis in order to understand its features?

Michel Aglietta suggested a regulation approach interpretation of the contemporary crisis having as a model the development of the US capitalist state (of capitalist industrial relations). He points to two basic systems of "regulation" in post Civil War U.S. economy : an "extensive régime of accumulation" and an "intensive régime of accumulation".

The "*extensive régime of accumulation*" is that in which there is a predominance of absolute surplus value and struggle over the length of the working day. This regime also implies a growth of the capital stock which does not change the existing production methods and which is accompanied by low productivity growth. On the other hand, there is the "*intensive régime of accumulation*" where there is predominance of relative surplus value, a rising productivity of labour and regulation of the length of working day. The "intensive régime of accumulation" is also called: Fordism. The crisis of the intensive régime of accumulation in the monopolistic form of regulation - there are two forms of regulation that refer to the two régimes of accumulation: extensive régime of accumulation: competitive form of regulation, intensive régime of accumulation: monopolistic form of regulation - it results from the conjunction of a broader series of conditions forming a specific institutional structure. The current crisis resulted from the changes in the system of production.

For Aglietta the crisis of Fordism is predominantly the crisis of a mode of labour organization but this crisis extends to the sum total of the relations of production and

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<sup>1</sup> See Bob Jessop, *ibid.*, p.13; see also, Bob Jessop, "Conservative Regimes and the Transition to Post-Fordism: the cases of Great Britain and West Germany", 6th Conference of Europeanists, Washington, 1987; "Thatcherism the British Road to Post-Fordism?", Essex Papers in Politics and Government, no 68, Essex, 1989.



exchange. Consumption has to play a major role in this process. The socialization of consumption becomes a decisive terrain and battle-ground of the class struggle. But, under the Fordist state, collective consumption declines and at the same time its costs increase. Because:

the labour process of Fordism, in fact pushes to the limit the mechanical principle of work collectivization. This principle only proves effective in the repetitive long production runs of standardized commodities. It is totally inadequate for the production of collective services. Either these services are produced by capitalists with undeveloped methods, and their cost grows astronomically as the social demand for them rise.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the only solution for capital is the public undertaking of the cost (state intervention) and this means that these public bodies help capital to absorb labour that is unproductive from the point of view of surplus value.

Fordism created a new social norm of working class consumption in which individual ownership of commodities governed the concrete practices of consumption. Two commodities were predominant in this process: *standardized housing* and the *automobile*. The fetishism of the commodities was institutionalised in the "affluent society" model and the sovereign consumer took the place of the sovereign citizen.

Individuals were not initially interpellated as subjects by one another, in accordance with their social position: they were interpellated by an external power, diffusing a robot portrait of the "consumer".<sup>2</sup>

This is the so - called: "consumer society". Is this model in crisis now and a new régime of accumulation emerging? "Neo-Fordism"<sup>3</sup> -a term proposed by Christian Palloix to describe this new era- is based on a new model of capitalist production involving automatic production control or automation where the machines control their own operations. The new principle is: the recomposition of tasks.

The new system is characterized by a scientific knowledge of each stage in the production process, a redefinition of production norms, job positions and a reconstruction of the production unit and finally the use of electronics in the treatment of information and capacity to programme systems of control. Job rotation and job enrichment are the ultimate extensions of the principles of Fordism and Taylorism.

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<sup>1</sup>Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: the US Experience*, New Left Books, London, 1979, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>See Christian Palloix, "The Labour Process: from Fordism to Neo-Fordism", *The Labour Process and Class Analysis*, CSE pamphlet, no 1, 1976.

Job enrichment leads to the formation of semi-autonomous groups that are responsible for manufacturing or assembly programmes; but each group is collectively responsible for the execution of the production plan. The group divides up its tasks between its members. The control over workers and production becomes more abstract.

The workers are no longer subjected to a constraint of personal obedience, but rather to the collective constraint of the production process.<sup>1</sup>

But a disciplined workforce can only be created within a disciplined society. The state increasingly intensifies its control over all aspects of living towards what can be termed: "*totalitarian liberalism*", that is, a decline even of formal liberty. As Aglietta put it:

This overall organisation of society within the state, by which modern capitalism attempts a solution at the political risk of universalizing its social conflicts, evidently gives rise to a *strong totalitarian tendency under the ideological cover of liberalism*. The socialization of the conditions of life can be a support for accumulation only if leading fractions of the capitalist class succeeds in imposing an overall management of labour power by binding the conditions of its reproduction in a right network of social controls.<sup>2</sup>

So Aglietta seemed to indicate a totalitarian tendency of the modern state under the ideological cover of liberalism. The debate on post-fordism in Britain became dominant in the analysis of what the Communist Party of Great Britain calls the era of "New Times". "New Times" are discussed later in relation to the analysis of "Thatcherism" as a transition to post-fordism.<sup>3</sup>

#### IV. 4. THE CONCEPT OF 'CRISIS': SOME REMARKS

One important factor in all the above analyses is the concept of crisis and its usage. Crisis has been understood as a crisis of the labour movement, a crisis of social democracy and finally as the crisis of the capitalist state or of late-capitalism.

The first of these hypotheses supporting the idea of the crisis of the labour movement is closely linked with the thesis of the decline in working class membership

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<sup>1</sup>Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 396, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup>See Bob Jessop, "Thatcherism the British Road to Post-Fordism?", Essex Papers in Politics and Government, no 68, Essex, 1989; Bob Jessop *et al*, "Farewell to Thatcherism? Neo-Liberalism and 'New Times'", *New Left Review*, no 179, 1990; Jessop *et al*, *Thatcherism: A Tale of Two-Nations*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989.

and the growing embourgeoisification of the proletariat. De-industrialisation and the emergence of new technologies caused the steady decline of the old blue-collar working class whose place was rapidly taken by an expanding white-collar stratum or what is usually called the "new petty bourgeoisie".<sup>1</sup> The crisis of the labour movement -according to the above thesis- is manifested in falling trade union membership and increasing industrial militancy. The latter is predominantly expressed in sectionalist strikes with a focus almost exclusively on economic demands rather than a broader political perspective.

The second thesis deals with the crisis of social democracy as it has been experienced in Western Europe in the post-war period until the breakdown of social democracy in the late 1970s. Social democracy is viewed as an unsuccessful manager of capitalism. Social democracy as the middle way between "actually-existing" socialism and capitalism proved unable to transcend both. Social democracy was seen as the manager of a dissensus brought about by the deficiencies of the capitalist system and as the *prime* disciplinary agent of the working class through the mechanisms of the Keynesian Welfare State. Reformist gradualism and consensus politics had to come to an end due to the inherent contradictions of the social democratic system which simultaneously tried to operate within the logic of capitalism on the one hand and attempted to "hijack" it for its own ends on the other.

The third thesis deals with the crisis of capitalism, seen in terms of a crisis of the capitalist accumulation process. A falling rate of profit and an intensification of class struggle almost brought the system to the verge of collapse. The crisis manifested itself in the political sphere as a crisis of corporatism (tripartite institutions) and a crisis of representation (crisis of the party system) topped with a more intensive *étatisme* expressed as a move towards the restoration of the authority of the state alongside efforts to liberate the market element or what Andrew Gamble described as the contradiction of "the Free Economy and the Strong State".<sup>2</sup>

The concept of crisis having been the common point of reference in the discussions outlined above, the term itself should perhaps be explored in greater detail. In the first place a distinction should be made between crisis and normality. Crisis is referred to

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<sup>1</sup>Cf., Alan Hunt (ed) *Class and Class Structure*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1977; Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, NLB, London, 1975.

<sup>2</sup>See Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State, The Politics of Thatcherism*, Macmillan Education, London, 1988; Andrew Gamble, "The Free Economy and the Strong State: The Rise of the Social Market Economy", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1979; Andrew Gamble, "Smashing the State: Thatcher's radical crusade", *Marxism Today*, June 1985; Andrew Gamble *et al* (The Sheffield Group, eds), *The Social Economy and the Democratic State: A new policy agenda*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1989.

as a turning point in illness, life, history; and as a time of difficulty, danger or anxiety about the future. Prior to its employment as a social-scientific term, the concept of crisis was used in medicine to ask if the organism's self-healing powers are sufficient for recovery. The subject's consciousness of her/his illness plays no role in the objective force that deprives her/him from her/his normal sovereignty. Nevertheless, one can not speak of a crisis without taking the subject who suffers the consequences into consideration because in the last analysis the resolution of the crisis involves the liberation or not of the subject caught up in it.

In classical aesthetics crisis signifies the turning point in a predestined process that despite all objectivity does not remain external to the acting subject. Classical Greek tragedy demonstrates this contradiction of subjectivity/objectivity in the idea of history as *catharsis*. The classical Marxist concept of crisis is developed against this background of crisis as a contradiction which finds its resolution in and through this very process of contradiction between the antagonistic agencies but this time at the level of the social formation. The resolution of all contradictions is seen in the revolutionary transformation of the system that creates them. Marxism's *catharsis* is projected/represented in the form of Communism but this kind of *catharsis* is not brought about by a *deus ex machina* as in Greek tragedy or by some sort of apocalyptic saviour as in theology; rather is seen as both the movement of the laws of history and the final eruption of the antagonism between the forces and the relations of production. As Marx put it:

From time to time the conflict of antagonistic agencies finds vent in crisis. The crises are always but momentary and forcible solutions of the existing contradictions. They are violent eruptions which for a time restore the disturbed equilibrium.<sup>1</sup>

The writings on crises and the falling rate of profit are an obvious area of study to anyone who wants to get to grips with Marx's conception of the contradictory nature of capitalism for he regarded crises as both the collective eruption of "all the contradictions of bourgeois economy"<sup>2</sup> and as "the forcible solutions of the existing contradictions".<sup>3</sup>

The classical Marxist theory which explains crisis in the form of structural crises or 'contradictions' in the mode of production carries not only an objective element,

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. III, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1984, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part II, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, p. 507ff.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 249.



according to which the capitalist mode is crisis-ridden despite the rational behaviour of the individual atomized subjects, but also a subjective or cultural element expressed in the failure of the subjects to perceive the contradictions of the system due to the mystification of the conditions of their existence in the particular form taken by alienation in capitalism, i. e., the fetishism of commodities.<sup>1</sup>

Cultural explanations of crises in contrast to the classical Marxist prognosis of economic crisis potentially leading to social breakdown, revolution, and the possibility of liberation from crisis, and also recent theories of crisis have by contrast emphasised the capacity (or incapacity) of modern institutions to incorporate and neutralize endemic crisis tendencies, and with the efficacy of crisis-management structures. Jürgen Habermas in his *Legitimation Crisis* viewed as problematic the legitimacy of both private capitalism, state modes of conflict-management and motivational commitment to what he called 'civil' and family-centred privatism.<sup>2</sup>

According to Hall's analysis the present crisis is a crisis of hegemony, that is a crisis of a specific settlement in the political sphere and not a crisis of the forces in the existing arrangement of the relations of production; for Hall politics is a production of subjects. Hall's analysis differentiates from a classical Marxist viewpoint to the extent that Hall's theory endorses an interpretation of crisis on the basis of a "cultural critique" of capitalism. Consequently, according to this approach, people are constructed through discourse and where "Thatcherism" was successful was in its capacity to articulate the demands of civil society. "What Thatcherism, as an ideology does", Hall wrote, "is to address the fears, the anxieties, the lost identities of people. It invites us to think about politics in images."<sup>3</sup>

Hall's approach to "Thatcherism" and Hobsbawm's analysis of the crisis of the labour movement are primary examples of a wider theoretical and political current in Britain which is called "the new-revisionism" in the sense of Giles and Kitching's approaches to the subject.<sup>4</sup> Similar to the "old revisionists" of the 1950s and 1960s they reject class politics and advocate a "pragmatic" approach to suit what they

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<sup>1</sup>See Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, part I, ch. 1, section 4, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1983.

<sup>2</sup>See Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, Heinemann, London, 1976.

<sup>3</sup>See Stuart Hall, "Gramsci and Us", *Marxism Today*, June 1987, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>See Radice Giles, *Labour's Path to Power: The New Revisionism*, Macmillan, London, 1989 where he suggests that the new revisionist strategy is the best one possible for Labour's electoral success; or Gavin Kitching's ideas elaborated in his book *Rethinking Socialism: A Theory for a better Practice*, Methuen, London, 1983, where he reaches similar conclusions; for a critique of the "new-revisionist" current in Britain see Ralph Miliband, "The New Revisionism in Britain", *New Left Review*, no 150, 1985.

understand as a changing social structure. Only this time, capitalism's nature lies not in affluence but in recession.

#### IV. 5. THE "NEW REVISIONISM" IN BRITAIN AND POLITICAL PRACTICE

Many of the above discussed issues are reflected in the Labour Party's discourse. It is rather commonplace for political parties when they find themselves in the place of opposition to engage in a painful process of revaluation of their values. This exercise is particularly difficult for the Labour Party because of its inherently contradictory nature. The Labour Party is usually described as "a broad church". This "church" fills the whole spectrum from the "soft" left to the "hard" left and from centre-right to the militant tendency, and "heretics" and "orthodoxists" try to accommodate themselves and to pull the party to their ideological side.

The 1983 Conservative victory opened a new era of socialist re-thinking in Britain which is not, in fact, such a novelty for the British Left. The 1983 Labour Election Manifesto had been described as "*the longest suicide note in history*"<sup>1</sup> due to its loud left-wing crescendos especially on the issue of unilateral disarmament.

The theoretical debates were interwoven round the impact of established "Thatcherism". The Left seemed to start taking seriously into consideration what they previously tended to think as a temporary phenomenon. Their optimism gave way to deep pessimism and despair but nevertheless they started making the first serious attempts to explain on the one hand the continuous development of "Thatcherism" and -what it seemed to indicate- the permanent decline of socialist ideas and values, at least in the British context of social democracy. There were at least two major theoretical currents in the explaining of Thatcherism and the advance to socialism. One response came from the Eurocommunists of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the other from the extra-parliamentary Left.<sup>2</sup>

Ralph Miliband in his essay in the 1983 *Socialist Register* with the paradoxical title "Socialist Advance in Britain" in the aftermath of the electoral defeat set out to criticize Labourism as an ideology of adaptation as opposed to Marxism an ideology of rupture.

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<sup>1</sup>The comment is Gerald Kaufman's, cited in Austin Mitchell, *Four Years in the Death of the Labour Party*, Methuen, 1989, reference in Hilary Wainright, *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties*, The Hogarth Press, London, 1987, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>See Eric Hobsbawm, "Labour's Lost Millions", *Marxism Today*, October 1983; Stuart Hall, "Realignment for What?" *Marxism Today*, December 1985.

The mainstream reasons given by commentators<sup>1</sup> for the 1983 landslide were the changes in the character and composition of the working class on the one hand and the divisions in the Labour Party on the other. Miliband argued that the former explanation was misconceived and the latter was inadequate because it did not explain why divisions, which were nothing new in the Labour Party, had been so much more significant, intractable and damaging than in the past.

According to Miliband the 1983 electoral defeat proved not that the workers were in favour of "Thatcherism" but that they were against Labourism. As he put it:

These are not figures which indicate any great, ideological and political shift to 'Thatcherism'. Nor do opinion surveys indicate any such shift. This is no argument for complacency: it is simply to note that what the Left confronts is not a surge to Conservatism and reaction but a very marked alienation of workers from the Labour Party, which is a very different matter.<sup>2</sup>

Characteristically Miliband's essay which referred to the shifts in Labour and Communist politics in the 1980s -inclusive of the above quotation- was entitled "The New Revisionism in Britain". Miliband's optimistic assumptions derived from what he saw as a "state of de-subordination" emerging in British society. The idea first emerged in his essay "A state of de-subordination" (1978) and further developed in his "Socialist Advance in Britain" (1983). Miliband's essay on de-subordination was written in August 1978 almost a year before the Conservative victory of May 1979, and dealt with the crisis of the labour movement on the one hand and the growing societal grievances on the other.

As Miliband put it in 1978:

...there is at work in Britain a process which I will call *de-subordination* for want of a better term to convey what is involved. De-subordination means that people who find themselves in subordinate positions, and notably the people who work in factories, mines, offices, shops, schools, hospitals and so on do what they can to mitigate, resist and transform the conditions of their subordination. The process occurs where subordination is most evident and felt, namely at "the point of production" and at the workplace in general; but also wherever else a condition of subordination exists, for instance as it is experienced by women in the home and outside.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Ralph Miliband, "Socialist Advance in Britain", *The Socialist Register*, 1983, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Miliband, "The New Revisionism in Britain", *New Left Review*, no 150, 1985, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ralph Miliband, "A state of de-subordination" *British Journal of Sociology*, Volume 29, Number 4, December 1978, p. 402, emphasis in the original.

De-subordination is, surely, a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the negation of the negation of economic and socio-political subordination; it is only the subjective element in liberation but the objective force which will help to realise it is a political agent capable of transcending both the limits of Labourism and bureaucratic socialism. The state of de-subordination is related to one of de-legitimation and anomie. For Miliband a successful rebellion could only find expression in a new political formation separate from both Labourism and bureaucratic socialism. This new political formation was Miliband's long-standing "obsession" and it can be found in almost all his writings. The shape and the forces behind this new political formation were not made explicit but it is clear that the present Labour Party had either to change or to disintegrate and the forces trapped inside after their release they would form/join this new socialist political entity. Miliband's interesting comment on the 1983 Conservative victory was not that the opposition lost but that the government won due to the opposition leadership's unwillingness to carry a radical programme forward and to persuade the electorate of its alternative vision of the future. But above all Labourism as an ideology of adaptation had to be dropped.

Relevant to the discussion of the causes of the 1983 Labour electoral defeat and also to the shift to 'realist' politics advocated by the "new revisionists" in Britain is Bob Rowthorn's essay "Think Positive-Rethink Labour" (1983).<sup>1</sup> Rowthorn's contribution is a paradigmatic example of the "new revisionists'" thinking concerning such issues as the role of class politics and the Left. Rowthorn attributed the Conservative victory to the electoral system, the declining support of the manual workforce for the Labour Party and finally Labour's anachronistic electoral performance. As he put it:

To sum up. The Labour Party -in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons- has increasingly lost contact with the people it aspires to represent. *Its view of culture and communications remains stuck in the 1940s.* Its cadre force has become less and less representative of the working class. And its own culture, language and style has become increasingly isolated from the world outside. The Labour Party has lost touch. As a consequence, large sections of the people -including many former Labour voters- no longer see the Labour Party as their representative, as an expression of their needs and aspirations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Bob Rowthorn, "Think Positive-Rethink Labour", *Marxism Today*, September 1983.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9, emphasis added.



As for Thatcherism, its rise was attributed to Labour's decline. Thatcherism was believed to work towards the creation of a *new consensus* by dismantling the supposed existing old social democratic one.

It involves destroying or recasting the institutions of the old consensus and reshaping society in a new Thatcherite image.<sup>1</sup>

And:

But the long-term aim of the Thatcherites is not merely to destroy the old consensus, reshape society and win support for themselves. It is to establish a new consensus of opinion, a consensus in which even their political opponents accept the basic tenets of their belief and share with them a common philosophy about how the economy and society should be organised.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of Rowthorn's writing the Liberal/SDP Alliance emerged as a serious threat to the Labour Party in the form of what was called "Thatcherism with a human face". So, which were the remedies suggested for stopping the Labour Party's decline? Firstly the renewal of the Labour Party and secondly the formation of a broad alliance of all the anti-Thatcherite forces. The former was related to the need of the Labour Party to "learn to listen" to what ordinary people say, that is:

...to be much more responsive to what the people think and feel. It must abandon many of its preconceptions and learn to see people as they really are, eschewing somewhat idealised stereotypes which can only mislead.<sup>3</sup>

For Rowthorn, on the one hand the rise of the white-collar stratum meant that there was a decomposition of the working class and this cost a decline of the manual workers' vote for Labour on the other. According to Rowthorn, the Labour Party, in order to recapture the lost ground, should be transformed into a movement, that is, it should become more flexible, develop a new cultural approach towards the media, build its own means of communication (a national daily newspaper) and finally supporting democratic procedures which will only occur if there is a democratization of the trade unions movement. And as for the question of democracy the Labour Party should support the demand for electoral reform in the shape of proportional representation. Also the Labour Party should learn to work in a pluralist manner, that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

is, to cooperate with societal movements and, in the political sphere, with the Communist Party of Great Britain, whose desire to affiliate or have a special relationship with the Labour Party dates back to the 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

The other reason for the Labour Party's electoral defeat was its political strategy. Labour should not abandon the cornerstone of its Labourist version of Socialism, that is Clause IV of the Party Constitution (Labour is committed to collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange) as its long-term strategy but instead should change its tactics by not looking extreme in its immediate programme and electoral manifesto pledges. According to Rowthorn the Italian Communist Party (PCI) should serve as a model and also "Thatcherism's" tactics!

Thatcherism has been successful more as a set of values, principles and objectives, than as a list of policies. The Left has something to learn from this.<sup>2</sup>

Finally comes the question of a broad alliance. He writes:

The problem is to build a new progressive coalition of opinion amongst the people against the Thatcherites, even if for the moment that inevitably assumes a somewhat defensive character. It is precisely such a broad swathe of opinion that lies behind the success of CND whose support extends well beyond the Labour Party to include Liberal, SDP, SNP, Plaid and even some Tory voters.<sup>3</sup>

And also:

The labour movement must become the focus of a broad anti-Thatcherite movement involving many who are not at present Labour voters, and some who are never likely to become so.<sup>4</sup>

The Labour Party has to learn to speak the language of the ordinary people. As Rowthorn put it:

The Party can survive and prosper. But to do so it must see the causes of its decline in a much broader way than has so far been the case. Being Left is not just about leaders, policies and internal accountability. It is equally about forms of behaviour, democracy, struggle and strategy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter II, Section II.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

Both Miliband and Rowthorn were against "Thatcherism", but what they were arguing for was quite different. Miliband attributed the sickness of Labourism to its innate nature and consequently his remedies were not only about drastic re-thinking but also about drastic disposal of the sick organism. Rowthorn on the contrary called for the dropping of Labourism based on class politics. The "new-revisionism" in Britain demonstrated in writings as Rowthorn *et al* has a deeper cause that goes beyond electoral tactics to the very nature of Eurocommunist strategy for socialist advance. The "new-revisionism" in the Britain of the 1980s differs from its counterpart in the 1950s to the extent that it rejects Marxism by using a Marxist phraseology.

Ralph Miliband traced the main causes of the second wave of revisionism in Britain in his essay "The New Revisionism in Britain" (1985). As he put it:

The revisionism of the present day is a very different matter, in its provenance, in its personnel and in its purpose. For most of the people concerned, Labour's new electoral defeats have only been the occasion for an anguished interrogation of the reasons for *Labour's decline of support in the working class*; and this interrogation is in turn part of a much larger *questioning of Marxist theory and socialist proposals and practises*. In this respect, the new revisionism in Britain links up with an *international phenomenon* nurtured from many different sources: *the experience of 'actually existing socialism', Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan, the collapse of Maoist illusions, Cambodia and the sour aftermath of victory in Vietnam, the withering of Eurocommunist hopes, the emergence of 'new social movements' born of dissatisfaction with the limitation of traditional labour and socialist movements and parties, a growing disbelief in the capacity of the working class to be the agent of radical social change, and a consequent 'crisis of Marxism'*. More specifically for Britain, there is also what has for many been *the trauma of 'Thatcherism'* and, even more traumatic, *its ability to win elections*.<sup>1</sup>

Miliband's enumeration of the causes of the "new revisionism" in Britain are very interesting especially those concerning the crisis of Marxism, the collapse of Maoism<sup>2</sup> and of Eurocommunist utopias, the electoral successes of Thatcherism and doubts about the working class as being the universal subject of change. As for Maoism elements of its belief in "cultural revolution" and the "mass line" were accommodated in the thought of the Eurocommunist Left -especially in the 1960s. Because the

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph Miliband, "The New Revisionism in Britain", op. cit., pp. 6-7, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>"Maoism" is here referred to in its specifically European version with the stress on the role of the intellectuals in educating the masses rather than as a political phenomenon specific to China's "cultural revolution".

Eurocommunist Left favoured the predominance of culture over the economy, in their hastiness to avoid an economic determinism and class reductionism, slipped into subjectivism and voluntarism by denouncing the universality of the working class and indeed of any granting of privileges to any fundamental class. Their preference instead was for hegemonic politics which place the emphasis more on unreconstructed entities and diverse identities which come together under the leadership of their organic intellectuals rather than with a unified subject and totalities. Mao's writings were influential (i. e., the Red Book) in the revolts of 1968 but the failures of these spontaneous cultural movements (Paris May 1968) made this current of Maoist New Left to re-think its intellectual foundations. Gramsci's writings provided the Eurocommunist Left with a more European outlook than Mao's. What they kept from Maoism was the idea that classes are not important but the 'people' can be constructed through culture which the intellectuals help to articulate based on what the 'people' think and desire. Laclau's concept of the "popular-democratic" interpellation, discussed earlier on, owes much to this Maoist cultural revolution and also Hall's insistence on the cultural level betrays such a secondary influence. The determinant factor in the insistence upon cultural politics is the rejection of the very idea of class struggle and class politics. The new revisionists although they come from different theoretical strands (Eurocommunists: left and right, post-structuralist, post-Marxist, etc.) are united in their belief in the absence of a revolutionary subject of change. The place of the revolutionary transformation of society is taken over by such ideas as Laclau's "revolutionary reformism" and "radical and plural democracy". They are also united in the idea that classical Marxism places the predominance on material interests generated at the economic level which makes it anti-humanist since bare materialism negates cooperation between people and denies a common good for all without considering that *class interests* are different from *individual interests*. By focusing on the individual subject they negate the importance of collectivities and they argue for a plurality of discursive and individualised subjects which come together -if ever- only through a system of articulation of myriads of symbolisms and reconstructions at the ideological level. These discourses deny the role of a unified subject and instead they resort to a plurality of entities as being all important and for that matter equally unimportant for social transformation. The very idea of transformation is negated in the last instance when everything is left at the discretion of discourse, that is, the construction of society through what every individual subject interpellates it to be. Society as such ceases to exist and together with it history becomes a random occurrence of events without any cementing essence. People are what they think they are and the truth or falsity of the real becomes a matter of subjective interpretation in



the name of the freedom of the discursive subject. Ernesto Laclau is the most prominent exponent of this thesis who, together with Chantal Mouffe, wrote the most important - in terms of a paradigmatic sketch of post-Marxist discourse - book: *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985)<sup>1</sup> where they argued for the merits of voluntarism and the bankruptcy of Marxist theory as a valid explanation of present day society. In fact they argued that in the last analysis such a thing as capitalism does not exist and class antagonism is a fiction, the only antagonism being between individuals and not collectivities. They also claimed that classical Marxist historical materialism is technocratic determinist because it places the emphasis on the forces of production and on economy as determining the whole spectrum without taking into consideration that Marx analysed the economy as a social relation and not only as an economic one. They also rejected the cornerstone of classical Marxism, the theory of exploitation because to them it belongs only to the economic level. It is interesting that all the references they made to Marx are taken from Cohen's book *Karl Marx's Theory of History, A Defence*.<sup>2</sup> Laclau and Mouffe do not see capitalism as a suture that is as a closed system but on the contrary by claiming that is an open system they imply its infinite possibilities for renewal on the one hand and they negate the need to overthrow it on the other.

#### IV. 6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The "new-revisionism" is however not merely a theoretical current without practical implications. It found expression both in party politics and in trade unions' practices. The debate over the year long miners' strike of 1984-85 serves as a good example of "new-realism",<sup>3</sup> the practical application of "new-revisionism" in the trade union movement.

"New realism" is the response of a part of the workforce to the new conditions and working practices. Its main characteristics embrace a limited trade union purpose: pay conditions and other individual benefits are stressed almost to the exclusion of any broader concerns and traditional values such as solidarity between workers are of little

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<sup>1</sup>Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, London, 1981.

<sup>2</sup>G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History, A Defence*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978.

<sup>3</sup>See Philip Bassett, *Strike Free: New Industrial Relations in Britain*, Macmillan, London, (1987 rev. ed), for the pros and cons of a new approach to industrial struggles, see "The New Age of Trade Unionism", *New Socialist*, October 1985; "The Unions Fighting on New Terrain", a roundtable discussion, *Marxism Today*, September 1985

or no importance. "New realism" represents the abandonment of trade union militancy; single-union agreements and no-strike deals are preferred to the more traditional collective bargaining approach; there is no workers participation in the decision making process of their unions; exclusion of direct participation is linked to the alternative of postal ballots sometimes by using state funds for that purpose - a cause of dispute within the TUC. And, an equally important point, trade unions who adopt this approach are the representational and organisational form of the "core worker".

"New realism", by having as its preoccupation the securing of jobs for its members, has as a counter effect the creation of a more disciplined workforce. The most characteristic example of a trade union which has adopted the "new realism" is the EETPU (the electricians).

"New realism" questions the whole approach to class struggle and its manifestations. The year long 1984-85 miners' strike under Arthur Scargill's leadership was seen as the swan song of working class militancy. The impact of this strike on left theory and political practice in Britain is quite remarkable. The strike posed questions about the way class struggle should be conducted, about traditional and new forms of struggle. For some left-wing observers the strike was an anachronism because it was based on the old male, macho, violent and undemocratic way of fighting out a class enemy; it lacked that feminist element of common sense which suggests that although it might be against the law it is legitimate owing to its being a non-violent form of confrontation.<sup>1</sup> This sort of argument emerged predominantly from the feminist socialist domain of the Communist Party of Great Britain via the writings of Beatrix Campbell who was arguing against "Scargillism" on the grounds that it was a male-sexist way of fighting out a class war. Campbell made a distinction between illegitimate male confrontation and female non-violent direct resistance. As she put it:

Macho militancy encrusts the myths of the hard Left, which has barely been touched by *the cultural revolution* within the working class over the past 15 years.<sup>2</sup>

And further:

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<sup>1</sup>See Beatrix Campbell, "Politics Old & New", *New Statesman*, Vol 109, 8 March 1985.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 24, emphasis added.

Violence and law-breaking have been elided in the minds of the centre-left...But they all confuse chaotic macho violence with illegal direct action. They confuse *legality* with *legitimacy*.<sup>1</sup>

But she was not alone in these assumptions. The miners' strike shone as a beacon against Law and Order, as a threat to the established relations of production and as the potential revolutionizer of other sectors of the political spectrum; hence, the strike had to be isolated and marked out as sectarian and economistic. Most interesting is the way discussants interpreted the outcome of the strike. According to the right-wing of the labour movement it was undoubtedly a clear cut defeat of outdated modes of struggle, i.e., militancy, machismo in contrast to more "feminised" or peaceful ways of struggle. For others it was a victory of working class solidarity and fighting spirit;<sup>2</sup> it was a victory of "the enemy within" which stressed the state repressive and ideological apparatuses to their limits proving the working class' revolutionary potential. The tremendous power of class expressed in the every day struggle of miners' and their supporters, in for example the self-realization of the women in the mining communities as political agents, gave a different meaning to feminism and gender relations. The miners' strike marked a watershed in British politics and served as a guinea pig for the "Thatcherite" experiment, namely the project of eliminating trade unions' power step by step in order to build a "strong state and a free economy". MacGregor's -the then President of the National Coal Board- style of macho-management differs from Edwardes -president of British Leyland in the late 1970s- only in form but not in content.

The Labour Party's attitude towards the issue of 'Law and Order' was made clear at the 1985 Conference, in Bournemouth. The discussion of Composite 69 moved by Arthur Scargill, the president of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), at the 1985 Annual Conference of the Labour Party in Bournemouth called for a:

(a) a complete review of all cases of miners jailed as a result of the dispute;

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 25, emphasis in the original.

<sup>2</sup>For an account of the miners' strike see Ralph Samuel *et al*, (eds), *The Enemy Within: Pit Villages during the 1984-85 Miners' Strike*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1986; *Doing Dirt on the Miners*, *New Socialist*, October 1986, pp.12-16; Hywel Francis, "NUM United: A Team in Disarray", *Marxism Today*, April 1985; Hywel Francis, "Coalfield Conundrums", *Marxism Today*, September 1987; "The Miners' Strike: A Balance Sheet", a roundtable discussion, *Marxism Today*, April 1985, Huw Beynon (ed) *Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miner's Strike*, Verso, London, 1985; Martin Adeney and John Lloyd, *The Miner's Strike, 1984-5, Loss Without Limit*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1986; John Saville, "An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike 1984-5", *The Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, London, 1985/6

- (b) reinstatement of miners sacked for activities arising out of the dispute;
- (c) reimburse the National Union of Mineworkers and all other unions with all monies confiscated as a result of fines, sequestration and receivership.<sup>1</sup>

He pointed out the role of the Janus face of the state; coercion (violence) from the repressive state apparatus (eg, police) and the organised use of the judiciary on the one hand, and consent (ideology) on the other (eg, the role of the media). He spoke of the historic struggle of miners and the women's support groups. And finally he stood in favour of retrospective legislation. The latter issue is the most important and comes into conflict with the Tory idea of Law and Order, the Labour Party's electoral mentality and the Communist Party's new approach to struggle.

Overwhelmingly against the NUM's composite stood the EETPU. Eric Hammond's speech was another explicit manifestation of the "principles" of "new realism". He accused the NUM leadership of bad strategies: "...the consequences the NUM seeks to alleviate are wholly of their own making, a direct result of their strategy and their shortcomings." And "...above us all is the law and the individual's right to challenge every authority through the law" and finally his controversial statement: "Lions led by donkeys"<sup>2</sup> A different approach came from Ron Todd (TGWU) "I prefer donkeys to jackals. I move 69".<sup>3</sup> The official view of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party was expressed by Neil Kinnock who said: "There are no donkeys, no jackals, only people".<sup>4</sup> The National Executive Committee's proposal in relation to Composite 69 was as follows:

The NEC is asking the National Union of Mineworkers to remit this resolution on the grounds that the NEC supports the first part, referring to review, and support the second part, referring to the reinstatement of victimised miners, and opposes the third part, calling for retrospective reimbursement.<sup>5</sup>

What does it mean in practical terms? Neil Kinnock made this explicit.

It is a fact that if we were ever endorse the idea of retrospective reimbursement we would harm our chances because people would be very confused about our attitude towards *the rule of law* and we would give heavy calibre ammunition to our enemies to misrepresent us, to defame us

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<sup>1</sup>*Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, (Bournemouth 1985), The Labour Party, London, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 153.



and to demolish the hope that the miners have got of getting support from a Labour government.<sup>1</sup>

The accommodation of political forces into the new realities of "Thatcherism" was seen as inevitable. The debate on "Thatcherism" unveils a remarkable similarity with the debates in the 1950s when once again the "end of ideology"<sup>2</sup> and the belief in the diminishing role of class politics were proclaimed due to the supposed change in the nature of capitalism. The classical Marxist theory of the objectivity of the laws of capitalist development is interpreted in a pessimistic manner leading to accommodation to the new realities instead of seeing these developments as a process of class struggle whose outcome cannot be predetermined. The laws of capitalist development provide the framework within which crises are resolved and re-emerge till the forces of production burst the shell of the anachronistic relations of production. Capitalism will give way to a higher stage of production but this will not happen automatically. Objective forces (laws of capitalist development) and subjective forces (class struggle) are not separate, but are both part of the same process. The "new-realist" approach for the "new-times" denies precisely the latter assumption.

In the next Chapter a presentation of the proclamation of "New Times" and "new realism" in the Labour Party's Policy Review and the Communist Party's *Facing Up To The Future*, draft programme for discussion, will be attempted.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 155, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>See Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology, On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Free Press, New York, 1965 (c1962).

## CHAPTER V: PROCLAMATION OF "NEW TIMES"

### V. 1. INDIVIDUALIST SOCIALISM VERSUS SOCIALIST INDIVIDUALITY: THE CASE OF THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY

The Communist and the Labour Party's new policy documents will be discussed in this Chapter. The aim is to show how the theoretical preoccupations of the Left's 'rethinking' of socialism, which has been going on for the bulk of the last decade, became part of the political practice of the above parties. This being so we shall draw not just on the documents themselves but also on the work of relevant theorists such as Plant and Nove.

And we shall begin with the Labour Party which is looking to the 1990s through the review of its politics and policies. Labour's Policy Review was established by its Annual Conference in October 1987. Seven working groups were set up in order to rethink the future of socialism -or Labourism- in Britain. The Labour Party's Policy Review should be seen as the *re-thinking* of a political party that has lost three election battles in a row and is trying to recapture the lost ground.

For the purpose of our analysis the first Report of the Labour's Policy Review for the 1990s, *Social Justice and Economic Efficiency*, together with the restatement of Labour's basic principles, *Democratic Socialist Aims and Values*, will be used.<sup>1</sup>

The document *Democratic Socialist Aims & Values* was written by Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party respectively; it is where the idea of *individualist socialism* is manifested.

The main theme of the drafts is: *Individual Freedom*. The socialist end is freedom and the mean to achieve it is equality.<sup>2</sup> Freedom to choose is not understood in a Friedmanite sense. This is a different kind of liberty, one that enables consumers to make their choices effectively.

Economic power and liberty are inextricably linked. Being free to make a choice is only the beginning of liberty.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Labour Party's Annual Conference, held in October 1989, approved the first reports of the seven Policy Review Groups which are going to be discussed here. The concluding section of Chapter IV is devoted to Labour's and the Communist Party's most important statements and documents published after 1989, which, in principle, follow the same path of argument and policies.

<sup>2</sup>See Roy Hattersley, *Choose Freedom, The Future For Democratic Socialism*, Michael Joseph, London, 1987.

<sup>3</sup>*Democratic Socialist Aims and Values*, The Labour Party, London, 1988, p. 4.

And also:

...a more equal distribution of wealth increases *the sum of freedom*.<sup>1</sup>

In *Democratic Socialist Aims & Values* freedom is seen as an end and equality as a means for the advancement of Democratic Socialism, something of a departure from the old-revisionist idea of freedom as a means and equality as an end to achieve universal welfare.<sup>2</sup> The Policy Review's means of achieving these ends are manifested in the idea of a non-intrusive state, a mixed economy, the decentralisation of power, a belief in consumer choices, and democratic citizenship. As the authors of the Policy Review put it:

We want a state where the collective contribution of the community is used for the advance of individual freedom...Real freedom with real choices and real chances.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of freedom is central to the document's vision of a democratic-socialist society. It is related to the belief in the power to choose as an individual citizen. The aim is a more equal, more free, more just society, all these implying a merely quantitative difference which might or might not be a qualitative differentiation from the current reality. But freedom to choose has always to coexist with the power to advance the right which the authors promise they are going to give to the individual. Their idea of freedom derives from the *Liberals*, especially John Stuart Mill's writings. As the authors put it:

We consider that the boundaries of liberty are drawn at the point where the exercise of freedom by one individual or group invades the freedom of others.<sup>4</sup>

Which brings to mind Mill's argument in *On Liberty*:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 4, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>See for the "old" revisionists' use of the concepts of freedom and equality, Roy Jenkins, "Equality", (1952) in *New Fabian Essays*, with a preface by C. R. Attlee, edited and with a new introduction by R. H. S. Crossman, J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, London, 1970; Brian Abel-Smith and Kay Titmus (eds), *The Philosophy of Welfare: Selected Writings of Richard M. Titmus*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1987; for the "new"-revisionists's understanding of the same issues -in the Labour Party-, see Roy Hattersley, *Choose Freedom, The Future For Democratic Socialism*, Michael Joseph, London, 1987.

<sup>3</sup>*Democratic Socialist Aims and Values*, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, *so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it...* Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.<sup>1</sup>

The authors of the Policy Review are trying to surpass the idea that freedom conflicts with equality. As they put it:

Freedom and equality far from being conflicting objectives, as our opponents pretend - are inextricably connected.<sup>2</sup>

Any conception of freedom which is not merely abstract presupposes a conception of power. Therefore any discussion of the relation between freedom and equality presupposes that one addresses questions of power.

"*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*" are crucial elements of the programmes of the bourgeois revolution and were used in the classical Marxist theory with reference to the real circumstances which gave birth to them. The document recognises within its set of values that "a more equal distribution of power as well as wealth"<sup>3</sup> is essential. This conception inevitably addresses a formulation of a theory of rights and justice, and consequently a moral evaluation of what is "wrong" in the system without necessarily asking for the overthrowing of the system that gives rise to them, but rather for its transformation.

The document seems to take the standpoint of equality as being an aim related to a theory of rights. This is associated with the idea of individual rights and the idea that individuals should be treated as equals, this equality deriving from their capacity as human beings. If equality is not achieved then arises the moral argument about the wrongness and unjustness of treating individuals as unequal, irrespective of *the system of rights* which arises under a certain mode of production. From a classical Marxist viewpoint, equality, or the lack of it, it is not the determinant factor, the latter being exploitation. Marx never attacked the capitalist mode of production as unjust from a merely ethical viewpoint.<sup>4</sup> Marx's theory of capitalism and his critique of the

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<sup>1</sup>J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, H. B. Acton, (ed) Everyman's Library, London, 1987, p. 81, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>*Democratic Socialist Aims and Values*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Although there are arguments for and against Marx's attacking capitalism from a moral standpoint, see Steven Lukes, *Marxism and Morality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988; Jeremy Waldron, *Nonsense Upon Stilts*, Methuen, London-New



social democratic movement of his time involved a critique of the idea of "Equality". In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* Marx criticised the social democratic idea of a "fair" and "just" distribution of the proceeds of labour to all members of society with equal rights.<sup>1</sup> In doing so he implied that the real demand for equality is the demand for a *classless society*. Bourgeois society by no means is an unequal society in the sense that every one as soon as he/she has property is free to dispose of it in the market as "a free and equal individual".

Marx, with a certain degree of irony, was insisting that the market was already the realm of equality.

...a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. *Freedom*, because both buyers and sellers of a commodity, say of labour-power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agents, and the agreement they come to, is but the form in which they give legal expression to their common will. *Equality*, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. *Property*, because each disposes only of what is his own. And, *Bentham*, because each look only to himself.<sup>2</sup>

This equality and freedom is only legal, thus formal, and it derives from a theory of rights based on property relations. But the above concepts can only be helpful in the context of raising a proletarian consciousness, that is make people aware of their position in a system that creates injustice. As Engels wrote in *Anti-Dürhing*:

The demand for equality in the mouth of the proletariat has therefore a double meaning. It is either -as was the case especially at the very start, for example in the Peasant War - the spontaneous reaction against the crying social inequalities, against the contrast between rich and poor, the feudal lords and their serfs, the surfeited and the starving; as such it is in that and in that only. Or, on the other hand, this demand,

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York, 1987; John Mepham and David Hillel Rubin, (eds) *Issues in Marxist Philosophy*, vol. 4, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1981, especially Allen Wood's essay on "Marx and Equality" where the author argues against an ethical viewpoint in Marxist theory of capitalism, this essay is also reprinted in John Roemer (ed) *Analytical Marxism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988; Norman Geras, "The Controversy about Marx and Justice", *New Left Review*, no 150, 1985, pp. 47-85, rep. in Alex Callinicos (ed) *Marxist Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, pp. 211-267, see esp. the footnotes on pp. 212-213.

<sup>1</sup> See Karl Marx, *Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers' Party [Critique of the Gotha Programme]*, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1983, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, (1867), Vol. I, The Process of Capitalist Production, edited by Friedrich Engels, translated from the third German edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1983, p. 172, emphasis added.

has arisen as a reaction against the bourgeois demand for equality, drawing more or less correct and more far-reaching demands from this bourgeois demand, and serving as an agitative means in order to stir up the workers against the capitalists with the aid of the capitalists' own assertions; and in this case it stands or falls with bourgeois equality itself. In both cases the real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for the *abolition of classes*. Any demand for equality which goes beyond that of necessity passes into absurdity.<sup>1</sup>

And again, Engels in a letter (London, March 18-28, 1875) to August Bebel on the Social Democratic Party's Programme referred to the concepts of inequality and equality as follows:

The elimination of all social and political inequality is also a very questionable phrase in place of "the abolition of all class distinctions"...The idea of socialist society as the realm of *equality* is a one-sided French idea resting upon the old "liberty, equality, fraternity" -an idea which was justified as *a stage of development* in its own time and place but which like all the one-sided ideas of earlier socialist schools, should now be overcome, for it only produces confusion in people's heads and more precise modes of presentation of the matter have been found.<sup>2</sup>

Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* insisted that the main issue is not a "fair", "just" and "equal" distribution of wealth because every distribution is a feature of the mode of production itself not independent of it.

As for the other two complimentary concepts, justice and fairness, Marx put it as follows:

Do not the bourgeois assert that the present distribution is "fair"? And is it not, in fact, the only "fair" distribution on the basis of the present day mode of production? Are economic relations regulated by legal conceptions or do not, on the contrary, legal relations arise from economic ones?<sup>3</sup>

It seems that the Labour Party's idea of equality is based on a *legalistic* conception of rights and obligations and this issue will be discussed in relation to recent ideas linking rights and citizenship within a *democratic social* context.

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1978, p. 133, emphasis in the original.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, International Publishers, New York, 1968, pp. 339-340.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx, *Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers' Party [Critique of the Gotha Programme]*, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1983, p. 16.

The idea of freedom is the most complex issue in the document. The Labour Party Policy Review employs it, in the social democratic revisionist tradition, as an end in itself. *Socialism=Freedom*. Since the authors of the document do not define socialist freedom, this concept is treated in the abstract and, related to rights and not to the overcoming of need. This modern theory of "real" freedom is not directly related to a theory of the society to which freedom manifests itself. It is interesting to counterpose the idea of freedom and equality in the document with alternative neo-Marxist approaches to the issue. For Agnes Heller, equality as a normative concept presupposes a negative value; since all people on the one hand have different physical and mental abilities and on the other hand different needs, then in order to have a society of equals the overcoming of the system that creates inequalities is needed. *Equality and freedom cannot exist alongside need*.<sup>1</sup> Distributive equality and freedom could only have a claim to existence under conditions of inequality; they will no longer be necessary in a society free from need.

The criticism that unless freedom from need is established any discussion about freedom is abstract applies especially to the Labour Party's linkage between freedom and choice.

It is in order to provide the largest number of real choices for the largest number of people that socialists believe in the redistribution of wealth and the power that goes with it.<sup>2</sup>

According to the document this aim can be achieved through taxation or ("fair taxes"). Freedom as an end is tended to be discussed here within the context of "freedoms of citizenship". As the document put it:

...freedoms of citizenship -freedom from fear, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of worship, freedom to dissent and protest *within the law*, and the freedom to *be equal under the law*.<sup>3</sup>

The document seems to restrict freedom to a legal framework of a combination of *status negativus* and *status positivus*; civic and political rights only. The concept of freedom is also discussed in the context of political freedom (civil and political rights).

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<sup>1</sup>See Agnes Heller, *The Theory of Need in Marx*, Allison & Busby in association with Spokesman Books, London, 1974; Kate Soper, *On Human Needs*, Harvester Press, Sussex, 1981; Zygmunt Bauman, *Freedom*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1988.

<sup>2</sup>*Democratic Socialist Aims and Values*, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5, emphasis added.

The discussion of social rights is held over in order to bring in the idea of citizenship and at the same time the idea of rights as involving responsibilities as well.

The primary example of this new thinking is Raymond Plant's Fabian essay *Citizenship, Rights and Socialism* (1988) which will be discussed later.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a class divided society and even of class disappears in the Labour Party's Policy Review. The rise of the "*consumer class*" is emerging in the document. The authors discussion of people's choices and the distinction they make is between the "privileged" (the rich) and the "non-privileged" (the rest of society). This distinction does not bring up the division of society in class terms and seems to be polarized between a "quasi"-class consisting of the "privileged" and another one consisting of the "non-privileged". No reference is made to the capital-labour relation or to classes in the capitalist formation.

When the authors discuss the limits of individual freedom they bring in the notion of government intervention as the main safeguarding institution enabling people to make their choices free from interference. The role of the state is non-intrusive. The authors claim that:

To us, the state is an instrument for sustaining and enhancing the liberties, of the whole community, no more, no less.<sup>2</sup>

The distinction between civil society and political society was once again reinforced in their understanding of the mechanisms of the decision making process. On the one hand stands the citizens and on the other the same person in its capacity as a worker organized in free trade unions "democratically controlled by their members and independent of the state and of the employer".<sup>3</sup> The perception of what community is, in the understanding of the Policy Review seems to be closer to Christian ethic or to its Victorian eleemosynary version. As the *Labour Party Policy Review* puts it:

To live in a community is to enjoy mutual advantages and mutual obligations. We believe that it is a *duty* of the strong to help those who are not strong.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Raymond Plant, "Citizenship, Rights and Socialism", *Fabian Tract*, no 531, October 1988.

<sup>2</sup> *Democratic Socialist Aims and Values*, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6, emphasis added.



This idea is further developed in the concept of the "*Active Citizen*"<sup>1</sup> which refers to an individual who spends money and time in order to serve the community. Charity and voluntary organisations are behind this concept. In the Conservative eleemosynary version the stress is on *responsibilities* of the citizen; the left wing version involves obligations as well as rights with the emphasis on civic rather than economic rights and a condemnation of "dependency"<sup>2</sup> in the form of welfare rights with a simultaneous stress on "workfare".<sup>3</sup>

The organisation of the productive economy is one of the mainstream themes of the document. Under the heading "*Socialism and the Productive Economy*", arises the idea of "*market socialism*". In the document the existence of the market is taken as the natural order of the things and as the only alternative to bureaucratic forms of allocation. There is no notion of crisis and cannot be since the market is seen as an ahistorical entity without any reference to its rise and its functions in capitalist societies. Science and technology are seen as the priorities for productive investment. Market allocation is approached as the supreme value in the context of a mixed economy involving private and public enterprise and capital. There is an explicit rejection of public ownership with the simultaneous rise of the idea of social ownership as an extension of individual rights.

It (social ownership) rests instead on each individual's right to control his or her own life, to have a say in the decisions by which he or she is affected, and to share fairly in the benefits to which each individual, by virtue of his or her participation in the whole social enterprise, *contributes and is entitled*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Stephen Cook, "To Alms Citizens", *The Guardian*, November 9, 1988; Joe Regaly, "The Active Citizen For All Parties", *Financial Times*, October 5, 1988.

<sup>2</sup>The term "dependency" is ideologically charged. It is used as a euphemism of the term "poverty" especially from right-wing theorists and also implies a negative value that people have chosen to be dependant on the state not that a certain societal system made that a necessity.

<sup>3</sup>Although the term is not used in the Policy Review documents and in the other statements the substance is there in their belief of rights involving primarily obligations. For an illumination of this thesis, see the Labour Party's official publication *New Socialist* and the view expressed there in connection with the subject, especially the December 1988 issue where Ed Richards was more than explicit in his article "A Fanfare for Workfare?", pp. 11-14, where he argued that "...you have the 'negative liberty' not to work or train in the knowledge that *your benefit will be stopped* if you do so, *workfare is not coercive*. In practice it is coercive for all but the idle rich...Our society is immutably based on contractual relations, through which people daily incur responsibilities and obligations. It is a *relationship of reciprocity* which is unquestionably accepted.", (ibid., p. 12, emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup>*Democratic Socialist Aims and Values*, p. 9, emphasis added.

Despite the importance attributed to the functions of the market in the document it is also realised that in practice some goods cannot be left to the operations of a "free" market.

The public utilities are by their nature monopolies...It is essential that they remain in public ownership - nationalized, in the original sense of the world.<sup>1</sup>

The only unsatisfactory element of the market that the document acknowledges is that the market deprived some people of choices, which deficiency nevertheless can be solved through regulation in the form of government intervention.

...the market, where properly regulated, is a generally satisfactory means of determining provision and consumption;<sup>2</sup>

This regulation is based on moral grounds:

Democratic socialists believe in market allocation - but market allocation guided by agreement that the competitive system should pursue the objective of greater freedom, greater equality and greater choice.<sup>3</sup>

The document *Democratic Socialist Aims and Values* should be read in conjunction with the further Policy Review Document, *Social Justice and Economic Efficiency*, especially the sections on "*Consumers and the Community*" and "*Democracy for the Individual and the Community*" where the ideas expressed in Neil Kinnock's and Roy Hattersley's essay are taken up and applied to society, the latter being seen as formed by a community of people in their capacity as consumers

In the first of these reports new technology and government intervention is seen as shaping a new society with new attitudes and expectations. Community is viewed as:

...a complex of relationships between the individual and the society...<sup>4</sup>

Community defined in this way excludes any notion of a class ridden society. Community is seen as characterised by equality of opportunity but not necessarily of outcome, mutual responsibility and individual security, a plurality of provision and a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>*Social Justice and Economic Efficiency*, The Labour Party, London, 1988, p. 27.

call for a "new public enterprise culture".<sup>1</sup> Shareholding initiative will substitute Thatcherite popular capitalism together with a new enterprise culture which is consumer oriented.

There is no reference to producers except in their capacity as consumers. This departure marks a watershed even from the "old" revisionist thinking, a fact that the document seems to realise when it is stated that a socialist project must distance itself from any neo-liberal understandings.

We do not seek in any way to accept or absorb the boundaries of Thatcherism, but rather to leapfrog over them into the 21st century - where quality of life, care for others and personal fulfilment will take precedence over self-interest and greed.<sup>2</sup>

The section on *Democracy for the Individual and the Community* approaches the character of community from a legalist standpoint. Rights and obligations should be safeguarded within a legal framework. As it is put:

The task for the future is to extend both the democratic rights and *responsibilities* of all citizens. This is the key to a community in which everyone is a full and equal member, as well as being the basis of good government. Those democratic rights can only be exercised where society's institutions are accountable and representative and where the individual can challenge government decisions and actions; and at the same time, be protected from the exercise of arbitrary power...fundamental conditions of freedom and of citizenship...<sup>3</sup>

A Bill of Rights is rejected on the grounds that "by nature it is concerned with negative rather than positive freedom" and will "be at the mercy of judges" and last but not least that it will "make it even more difficult for individuals to bring a case before the European Court of Human Rights".<sup>4</sup>

Although a Bill of Rights is rejected the document is in favour of a Charter for legal rights. Equal access to the law, equal rights under the law, legal aid and a consumer-led legal and advice service commission and more specialist courts are included in the Labour Party Policy Review agenda.

The document states that "Rights without enforcement are a mockery"<sup>5</sup> without differentiating in terms of the sort of rights it refers to nor it addresses the issue

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>*Social Justice and Economic Efficiency*, op. cit., p. 33, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

whether the law is neutral or it reflects a certain society's attitudes. Neither the relation between law and need is discussed.

The discussion of citizenship was left for our concluding section because it brings into the frame questions about the state, class, community, rights, obligations, socialist ethics, values and the socialist vision of the Labour Party. We have chosen to discuss Raymond Plant's writings on the subject because on the one hand Plant is one of the Labour Party intellectuals whose ideas are influential although not always in accordance with the official party line, and to show the growing identification between Plant's views and the official Labour Party theoretical conceptualisations on the other..

Raymond Plant in a Fabian Society pamphlet entitled "Citizenship, Rights and Socialism"<sup>1</sup> argued for a society based on "*democratic citizenship*". The Left should seek for means of empowering citizens to lead their lives as autonomous individuals and to create the framework for a citizenship which includes not only rights but also responsibilities in the context of a just and fair distribution of society's wealth. Workfare is one of the main themes -although the term itself is not used. The idea of democratic citizenship, Plant argued, is a challenge to the New Right idea of limited government intervention in the regulation of resources.

The role of the market is not denied but a form of intervention sometimes is seen as necessary for the promotion of social justice. Plant admitted that a citizenship approach reflects the impact of social liberalism. As he puts it:

The citizenship approach is much more at home with individualism: it sees citizenship as securing the framework of rights and resources within which individuals can pursue their own conception of the good in their own way; and the communal basis of society is reflected in *agreement* about the common resources and means of citizenship rather than in terms of common ends.<sup>2</sup>

He rejects Marxism because:

The class-based approach sees the market as inherently capitalist and its relationships as exploitative and dehumanising. This clashed with the citizenship approach which assumes that there are common values between different groups and classes in society which are genuine (i. e. not the product of what Marxists would call false consciousness). These values can provide a basis for political action to secure the rights and resources of citizenship within a mixed economy with some degree

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<sup>1</sup>See Raymond Plant, "Citizenship, Rights and Socialism", *Fabian Tract*, no 531, October 1988

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1, emphasis added.



of private ownership. The citizenship approach rejects Marx's argument that since class determines political interests there can be no common basis for citizenship while there is some private ownership of the means of production and associated class divisions.<sup>1</sup>

Plant's rejection of the classical Marxist theory of class is based on the argument that, first of all, "the industrial working class is too small a base from which to gain power"<sup>2</sup> and secondly that the classical Marxist theory itself rejects the notion of a shared interest between classes since society is divided on class lines based on the antagonistic relation between capital and labour (relations of production). According to Plant the classical Marxist analysis of society is incompatible with the idea of citizenship since the latter presupposes common interests and values across class lines. Citizenship is about people taken as individuals who share a common identity as "citizens". They form a community as far as they come to an agreement about the distribution of the common resources.

This agreement reminds one of Social Contract theory and especially Hobbes's theory of Sovereign power.<sup>3</sup> According to this theory, people will cooperate to produce goods and services when it is in their interests to do so. The Sovereign never needs to do anything positive, its mere existence is enough to empower and enable people, or to punish them when they prefer to break the agreement. If one reads 'State' for 'Sovereign' then one is confronted with a theory of public good provision with the state playing the role of the external deterrent force.

This Social Contract for the "New Times" is based more on a Hobbesian *Leviathan* rather than on a Rousseauian *Volonté Générale*.<sup>4</sup> No qualitative transformation of human nature is needed for cooperation; people can go on as usual but keep the norms of the agreement because of a self-interest principle. There is no transformation of societal conditions to such an extent as to make communal cooperation a matter of free human activity. No common goal is needed either. The only thing that matters is individual liberty. It remains unclear where the prefix "social" does come from since the main theoretical concern remains within a preoccupation with civic and political liberties and a Bill of Rights rather than social rights which involve an economic cost when they are overridden (eg. unemployment benefits).

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (1651), edited and with an Introduction by C. B. Macpherson, Penguin Classics, London, 1987.

<sup>4</sup>See Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, translation and introduction by G. D. H. Cole, Everyman's Library, London, 1983.

The classical rights are negative ones. They involve a minimum of state interference and the absence of a claim to common resources. The idea of social citizenship involves a right to collective resources and an equal common obligation towards society. The main expression of the latter is in the form of *workfare*.<sup>1</sup> The democratic socialist conception of the right to work does not seem to take into consideration the fact that since the rights to resources are not unconditional the obligations arising from them cannot be conditional. These conceptions are confronted with the methodological problem of justifying unemployed persons obligation to work. Unemployment and social security benefits are not seen by those conceptions in the context of an obligation on the part of society to provide them given the fact that society -or better still, the state- is not able to fulfil the conditions for the exercise of rights. Such problems become more acute especially under the capitalist system of allocation when it is more than "unjust" to ask for *reciprocity* since the basic conditions are not fulfilled.

The idea of the market is central here since citizenship is seen as carrying an emancipatory element for consumer choices.

Individual choice and pluralism are essential to citizenship and both are threatened by centralised planning.<sup>2</sup>

The idea that market allocation enables choices and planning but disables individuality since it is not a decentralised institution is common to Plant's argument, the Labour Party's Policy Review and the Communist Party of Great Britain's document *Facing Up To The Future*. The market is seen as the embodiment of choice and freedom but also as a potential "trouble-maker". The first part of the argument is taken for granted; the market and its institutions are a reality which must be accepted and improved. The second part brings into the discussion the role of the state and government as a "correction mechanism" of the deficiencies (ethical and economic) arising from market's function. Shares ownership, taxation, other forms of ownership like cooperatives are introduced as corrective measures. But not all need can be met by the market mechanism. So governments have to step in and provide collective goods like long-term training.

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<sup>1</sup>See Raymond Plant, "Citizenship and Society", *New Socialist*, no 58, December 1988, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Raymond Plant, "Citizenship, Rights and Socialism", *op. cit.*, p. 1.

Plant recognises that since the markets operate on the principle of self-interest then there is a need for regulation, but this need would not arise if the participants have a belief in "*civic responsibility*". As he put it:

The market here worked more efficiently and without regulation when there was a more widely accepted basis of morality and fair dealing...So, the market itself needs a framework of civic responsibility within which to operate just as interest groups and unions do.<sup>1</sup>

Similar ideas have developed in Alec Nove's *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (1983) where he argues the case for *market socialism* based on a "*dual economy*".<sup>2</sup> Conceptualisations such as Nove's had a growing influence in the formulation of the Labour Party's new market socialist orientated strategies, as these were expressed in the party's Policy Review documents.

According to Nove, central planning is inefficient in allocating resources, thus a democratic socialist strategy should reduce its role and increase that of the market. A dual economy is about a dominant system of "binding instructions from planning offices"<sup>3</sup>, and a large private sector organised through markets. Private ownership over the means of production is limited. This system according to Nove - and as it is endorsed by Plant and the Labour Party Policy Review - is made up of three types of enterprise: state-owned, cooperatives and private business. The absence of large-scale ownership makes the difference. This sort of organization is seen as providing choice and democracy through the collaboration of markets and planners, the latter being accountable to an elected assembly.

This idea of market socialism as the only feasible economic form of allocation, which is supposed to safeguard individual liberty, is praised by the documents discussed above. Individuals are seen primarily as consumers, buyers of services and voters not as producers.

For Plant liberty is seen as the absence of coercion, law and order as a "limitation on the arbitrary power of the executive"<sup>4</sup> and freedom as enabling choices. The link between freedom and choice is the ability to make choices. Education, health care, income, self-respect and a framework of law are the tools for "the emancipation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1983; for a critique of his argument, see Diane Elson, "Market Socialism or Socialization of the Market?", *New Left Review*, no 172, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Plant, "Citizenship, Rights and Socialism", op. cit., p. 5.

individual and communities."<sup>1</sup> The problem is the distribution of resources required for their fulfilment. The market again has to play a vital role. A definition of need as a moral question is given by Plant in the quotation cited below:

There is a moral question for political debate, not one which can be derived from a purely administrative approach. But the left should argue that citizenship requires the opportunity to participate in the normal or expected patterns of individual and family life and in the workplace, and define needs in the light of this.<sup>2</sup>

The argument about "normal and expected patterns"<sup>3</sup> of participation raises serious methodological questions. Distribution through the market as we mentioned earlier on could be unjust. Equal distribution is not always about equality. Plant seems to realise this when he refers to "legitimate inequalities" in favour of the worst off.<sup>4</sup> He suggests that because of the various meanings that one could give to the concept of "equality", it is better either to abandon the expression altogether and substitute "fairness" or to adopt some other concept which will bring in the idea of "legitimate inequality".<sup>5</sup> As he puts it:

If the basic goods of citizenship should be available to all, they should be considered as matters of *right and entitlement*...Rights can proliferate endlessly with interest groups making claims of one sort or another as basic *human rights*. It is not in anyone's interests that the range of rights should be so utterly opened. It devalues rights and over - extends the role of government so that the powers which it needs to protect expanding rights actually become a major threat to liberty.<sup>6</sup>

The above quoted paragraph sets a good topic for discussion. As we already mentioned rights fall into two broad categories, on the one hand (traditional) civic and political rights and on the other hand (modern) social and economic ones. The former require either a *status negativus* or a *status positivus* (in relation to state activity), the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>Cf, John Rawls' theory of "presumptive equality", that is the belief that there could be a broad measure of agreement, a shared presumption amongst people, that principles of justice should be chosen under certain conditions, see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 18; cf, Plant "Citizenship, Rights and Socialism", op. cit, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>Raymond Plant, "Citizenship, Rights and Socialism", op. cit, p. 10, emphasis added.



latter a *status activus*.<sup>1</sup> I think we are justified in making a distinction between *two concepts of citizenship* related to rights. Civic and political rights concerned with the idea of "*Democratic-Citizenship*", social and economic ones with "*Social-Citizenship*" and consequently with a different approach to the entitlement of enforcement. Plant seems to endorse a universal entitlement to the traditional rights and a notion of evaluation, i.e., the right to life as superior to the right to property. These rights can be empowered either by parliamentary action or -what Plant seems to favour- a *Bill of Rights*.<sup>2</sup> The latter as we already mentioned is rejected by the Labour Party Policy Review. As Plant -whose ideas are not always identical to those of the Labour Party's official policies- put it:

...individuals can be empowered in different ways so that the fact that social rights are not part of a Bill of Rights is not in itself a reason for rejecting it. The fact that property rights are entrenched is an obstacle but this could be met by arguing that a Bill of Rights only entrenches a general right to own property not to any specific amount or any specific sort and any proposal for redistribution of income through the tax or benefits system would have to be set against it. In my view the argument in favour of a Bill of Rights which restricts the arbitrary power of governments of the left as well as of the right is now essential to give meaning to any idea of democratic citizenship.<sup>3</sup>

A Bill of Rights as an extension of individual liberty is not necessarily a socialist conception. The Labour Party's rejection of a Bill of Rights is not based on those grounds but rather seems to express anxiety on the part of a potential party of government having to trouble itself with legal interpretations of such a document. On the other hand the left wingers of the Party (i.e., Tony Benn) argued against a Bill of Rights on the grounds of a limitation of a socialist project since there will be restrictions in wealth redistribution if there is a safeguarding of the right to property in the Bill.

The idea of social rights involving obligations derives from conservative terrain and is related to the question of rights as conditional or absolute. Plant is careful to say that in the present system it would be unjust to relate the right to work to an obligation to work because the economic prerequisites: "full employment, regional policy,

<sup>1</sup> See Michael Freeden, *Rights*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> See Raymond Plant, "Citizenship and Society", *New Socialist*, October 1988, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Plant, "Citizenship and Society", *New Socialist*, October 1988, p. 8; Plant had also expressed similar ideas with the ones mentioned here on the question of Citizenship and Socialism in his "Conservatism, Markets and Welfare", PSA Annual Conference, Plymouth Polytechnic, Plymouth, April 1988 and in "Citizenship, Liberty and Markets: Ideological Renewal in the Labour Party", PSA Annual Conference, University of Warwick, Coventry, April 1989.

defensible levels of training are not in place"<sup>1</sup> but by arguing that a libertarian approach will be difficult to defend because British society holds the belief that one has a right to something only if it arises out of contract and reciprocity, but this leaves the road open to arguments such as the one contained in *New Socialist* (1989). Paul Corrigan, Trevor Jones and Jock Young in their essay entitled "Rights and Obligations" in the above mentioned journal stressed the argument to its limits by suggesting that benefits should always be related to flexible training and implicitly to workfare<sup>2</sup> and people who refuse to take the initiative will have their entitlement cut off under a socialist government. The argument is similar to the Thatcherite version of responsibilities related to the dependency theory. As Corrigan *et al* put it:

*Reciprocity* is what we call the relationship between social rights, on the one hand, and social obligations, on the other...*all* social rights should be based on social obligations...any stress on the *right* to work must be met by a stress on the *obligation* to work... What would happen if, given these policies, of flexible training, work, child care and a benefits system somebody refused to take up paid labour? *In our mind there is no doubt what a socialist government would do - it would stop their benefit.*<sup>3</sup>

The ideas expressed above have a considerable impact on the shaping of the official Labour Party line. Some of the people who helped in the formulation of a modern democratic idea of citizenship and rights also contributed in the latest move towards constitutional reform *CHARTER '88*, which represents an informal association of individuals and bodies, including the *New Statesman and Society* and the Constitutional Reform Centre.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Raymond Plant, "Citizenship and Society", *New Socialist*, October 1988, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>See Paul Corrigan, Trevor Jones and Jock Young, "Rights and Obligations", *New Socialist*, February/March 1989, where they argue among others that "...*all* social rights should be based on social obligations" and also that "...any stress on the *right* to work must be met by a stress on the *obligation* to work" (*ibid.*, p. 17, emphasis in the original); the same line of argument with the stress on workfare is addressed by Ed Richards "A Fanfare for Workfare?", *New Socialist*, December 1988, pp. 11-13, where he argued that "Workfare could be a central plank in a new government's supply-side economic policy in addition to helping the unemployed" (*ibid.*, p. 12) and Raymond Plant on the same issue of *New Socialist* when he argued that "...one has a right to something only if it arises out of contract and reciprocity" (*New Socialist*, December 1988, p. 9), although he was careful to address the problems arising from a society not based on equality.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Corrigan, Trevor Jones and Jock Young, "Rights and Obligations", *New Socialist*, February/March 1989, p. 17, emphasis in the original.

<sup>4</sup>All the quotations concerning the *Charter '88* are taken from the eponymous pamphlet first published in November 1988. The idea for it arose in the offices of the

The starting point is again the 1688 "Glorious Revolution" as a historic victory over royal tyranny. But "the intensification of authoritarian rule in the United Kingdom has only recently begun" and "Britain has always been vulnerable to elective dictatorship." So, the signatories of the *Charter* "are united in one opinion only, that British society stands in need of a constitution which protects individual rights and of the institutions of a modern and pluralist democracy."

In this formulation the separation of the political from the economic and of the public from private can be read. The *Charter* is about "individual" rights; social rights are left behind because "part of British sovereignty is shared with Europe; and the extension of social rights in a modern economy is a matter of debate everywhere. We cannot foretell the choices a free people may make."

*Charter* '88 argument relates to "political, civil and human rights" and a "new constitutional settlement". Only civic and political rights as the rights of the "individual" are "inalienable". There is no identification of the social forces behind the need for a written constitution. The idea of "*universal citizenship*" is the cement of the document the primary concern of which is the enforcement of reform through the reform of Law. The *Charter* seems to argue from a *liberal* democratic standpoint posing two sets of priorities. The first is about immediate action for some of the proposal and the second for a long term proposal in the form of a written constitution.

The idea behind the *Charter* is that the checks and balances system of power established between the three partners, the Monarch, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, after the "Glorious Revolution", was broken down with the democratisation of British society and the rise of the modern party system.<sup>1</sup>

The electoral system could lead to an elective dictatorship<sup>2</sup> according to the *Charter*. That is why they ask for the creation of "a fair electoral system of proportional representation".

The overall problem of *Charter* '88 is the political implications arising from a move towards socialism based on classical liberalism's principles and from a tactical move aiming at the creation of an alliance of opposition to Thatcherism and transformation - in the long run - of the British state. Assuming that the first approach is true then one

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*New Statesman*, which joined forces with the Constitutional Reform Centre -as the Introduction to the *Charter* 88 informs us.

<sup>1</sup>See Lord Scarman's article in *The Observer*, Sunday 22 January, 1989.

<sup>2</sup>This is not the first time that such a strong case is made in favour for electoral reform. Lord Hailsham in his 1976 Dimbleby Lecture proposed both a written constitution and an entrenched Bill of Rights to combat what he named the prospect of "an elective dictatorship", meaning the dangers arising for personal liberties from the workings of a strong executive.

can argue that liberalism not only is incompatible with democracy but also with socialism. A critique of liberal principles and not an endorsement is needed for socialist advance. If the second speculation is correct, one can argue that this is not the proper way for socialists to organise, i.e., around liberal principles (Bill of Rights, civic and political rights to the exclusion of social and economic ones, etc.) because an alliance based on the idea of safeguarding the democratic institutions of the state under the rule of law without demanding their transformation runs the risk of safeguarding the existing order instead of changing it.

After discussing the Labour Party's new developments, we would like to turn our attention to the process of re-thinking taking place in the Communist Party of Great Britain and its solution to the problem of the transformation of society.

## V. 2. "FACING UP TO THE FUTURE" OR BRAVE "NEW TIMES": THE CASE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The Communist Party of Great Britain is "facing up to the future" through the redraft of its Programme, *"The British Road to Socialism"* last published in 1977. The main reason given for the Communist Party's decision, taken at its congress in November 1987, to redefine its politics is that it saw itself as on the eve of a Post-Fordist mode of existence or of what it called: a *New Order*.<sup>1</sup> The group that prepared *Facing Up To The Future*,<sup>2</sup> that is the draft that will serve the purpose of 're-thinking' left strategies and tactics for the "New Times" in the Communist Party's terrain, were: Beatrix Campbell, Marian Darke, Bill Innes, Martin Jacques, Monty Johnstone, Paula Lanning, Charlie Leadbeater and Jeff Rodrigues, with Margaret Woddis as secretary. A discussion of the main issues arising from the draft, its implications for political strategy and Marxist theory and the close interrelation with the debates in the 1980s on class, socialism and the state will be attempted in this section.

Almost a decade after the election of the first Thatcher government, British society is entering what might be called "*a new order*". The exact shape of this new order is not predetermined. It will be the outcome of political struggle. But its outline is becoming clear.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a critique of the Communist Party's new policies, see Michael Rustin, "The politics of Post-Fordism: or, the trouble with 'New Times'", *New Left Review*, no 175, 1989.

<sup>2</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, (published as a special Communist Party supplement) in *Marxism Today*, September 1988.

<sup>3</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 2, emphasis added.



What is this "new order"? It is the era of Post-Fordism<sup>1</sup> based on flexibility, information technology, team working and service-sector work which stepped in to replace the old Fordist mode of production, the mass worker and the mass consumer and consequently the post-war consensus between organised labour, business and the social democratic state.<sup>2</sup> According to the draft the new order is about diversity and choice and a revolt against the centralizing character of the old order. It is also about "assertive individualism",<sup>3</sup> Thatcherite "conservative modernisation"<sup>4</sup> and the decline of the nation-state in favour of internationalisation.<sup>5</sup>

One of the interesting parts of the document concerning our analysis here, is its approach to "Thatcherism" which refers back to Stuart Hall's analysis of the phenomenon as "authoritarian populism"<sup>6</sup>; and to most of *Marxism Today*'s contributors.<sup>7</sup> As the authors put it:

Thatcherism rise must be located in two contexts. Its initial arrival marked the complete exhaustion of the postwar social-democratic project. Its first task was to dismantle the rusting political infrastructure of the postwar consensus. But Thatcherism's project has since moved on. Its aim now is a "conservative modernisation", to ensure the new order is created in a conservative image.<sup>8</sup>

According to the document "Thatcherism" is about the marketisation of society and the centralisation of the state, the privatisation of aspirations, the abandonment of social responsibility and the collapse of social cohesion in favour of the ideology of individualism.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>See Stuart Hall, "The Great Moving Right Show", *Marxism Today*, January 1979; Stuart Hall, "Popular Democratic versus Authoritarian Populism: Two Ways of Taking Democracy Seriously", in Alan Hunt (ed) *Marxism and Democracy*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1980.

<sup>7</sup>See Martin Jacques, "Thatcherism - Breaking Out of the Impasse", in Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds) *The Politics of Thatcherism*, Lawrence & Wishart in association with *Marxism Today*, London, 1983, pp. 40-62, first published in *Marxism Today*, October 1979.

<sup>8</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 3.

At the centre of its political drive is a combination of individualism and authoritarianism. It has articulated demands for greater choice and individual responsibility with an ideology of assertive individualism.<sup>1</sup>

The rise of Thatcherism is, according to the document, a result of the break up of the postwar social democratic consensus.<sup>2</sup> The welfare state proved unable to deliver the goods so Thatcherism stepped into a vacuum and filled it with a free market ideology whose components are a combination of "assertive individualism" and authoritarianism. This analysis implies that the Thatcher government is the outcome of Labour's failure in modernizing the British economic base and responding to change.

*Facing Up To The Future* also praises the ability of Thatcherism in building alliances and mobilizing support.

It does not rely on a single class; it has constructed an alliance of diverse social forces behind its conservative modernization.<sup>3</sup>

This issue is taken up by the authors of the draft when they call for turning resistance to Thatcherism into opposition through the creation of an alliance among different groups which will share a common left vision of the "new order". The real obstacle is the divisions between the Left which the authors of the draft do not think can be solved through an *electoral pact*<sup>4</sup> alone. What should be done then?

In the past, the Left's project has provided a common reference point for a progressive social coalition -popular fronts in opposition to fascism in the '30s, the progressive expansion of the public sector in the postwar period. The Left will need such a vision in the future.<sup>5</sup>

This discussion on coalitions and popular fronts raises the question of social class and especially the belief in the recomposition of the working class which is one of the central issues in the realigned left's rethinking of socialism.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>See Dennis Kavanagh, *Thatcherism and British Politics: The End of Consensus?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987; Dennis Kavanagh and Peter Morris, *Consensus Politics from Attlee to Thatcher*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989; "The Decline of Post-War Consensus", (Symposium), *Contemporary Record*, Vol. 1, no 4, Winter 1988.

<sup>3</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>Remember here, Eric Hobsbawm's and Stuart Hall's claims on the decline of class consciousness and the recomposition of the working class, discussed in Chapter IV.

The document's definition of social class draws heavily from both the structuralist and the post-Marxist radical democratic terrains. The presentation of the issue of class in *Facing Up To The Future* derives from structuralism (Poulantzas: class position)<sup>1</sup> on the one hand and analytical-Marxism (Erik Olin Wright: contradictory class locations)<sup>2</sup> on the other. The working class as it is presented in *Facing Up To The Future* has little if no relevance to the classical Marxist category. The category of social class becomes simply just one of many oppressions with no particular centrality to social and historical analysis. In the draft this position is made clear:

Central to realignment of the Left is the *recomposition of the working class*, because assumptions about the character and interests of this class have provided the collective purpose for left politics. Class in modern capitalism is not the product of a single polarisation between a ruling class, which owns the means of production, and a working class of wage labourers. *Class is produced by the intersection of different kinds of exploitation*, which produce different class positions within the workforce.<sup>3</sup>

The classical Marxist category of "the ownership of the means of production" is replaced by the analytical-Marxist category of "the ownership of productive assets"<sup>4</sup> which is seen as an economic relation of appropriation based on income and skill credentials rather than as a relation of production related to the issue of who produces for whom and who appropriates what, that is, it is concerned with the appropriation of surplus product which, under the capitalist mode of production, is the struggle over the distribution of surplus value.<sup>5</sup> The authors of the draft endorse the analytical-Marxist definition:

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<sup>1</sup>See Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, New Left Books and Sheed & Ward, London, 1973; Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, New Left Books, London, 1975; Alan Hunt (ed) *Class and Class Structure*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1977.

<sup>2</sup>See Erik Olin Wright, "Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of Class Structure", *Politics and Society*, Vol. 9, no 3, 1980; Erik Olin Wright, *Classes*, Verso, London, 1985; Erik Olin Wright et al, *The Debate on Classes*, Verso, London-New York, 1989; Erik Olin Wright, "What is middle about the middle class?" in John Roemer (ed) *Analytical Marxism*, Maison des Sciences de l' Homme and Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Paris, 1986, pp. 114-141.

<sup>3</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 5, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup>See John Roemer (ed) *Analytical Marxism*, Maison des Sciences de l' Homme and Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Paris, 1986.

<sup>5</sup>For a critique of "assets ownership" and the use of the concept of exploitation in rational-choice Marxism see Guglielmo Carchedi, "Classes and Class Analysis", in Erik Olin Wright et al, *The Debate on Classes*, Verso, London-New York, 1989, pp. 105-126.

The working class is that class which has no productive assets to counter capitalist exploitation at work.<sup>1</sup>

There is also the issue of a contradictory class position, that is of an individual being a member of more than one class at the same time, something to be also found in analytical-Marxism's analysis. According to the draft:

...the development of postwar capitalism has produced a great swathe of wage earners and the self-employed, who *control some kind of productive asset -skills*, knowledge, organisational power over production- as part of the means of production. They are both exploited and exploiters. An increasing number of people in modern capitalism occupy these '*contradictory class locations*'. And this complexity has increased with the new divisions created by the transition to the new order.<sup>2</sup>

The ideas presented in *Facing Up To The Future* rely heavily on Poulantzas's analysis of the capitalist formation, although the terminology differs. For this reason it will be helpful if we make an extended reference to Poulantzas's views alongside those of Wright's analytical-Marxism, asking how both of these discourses are used in the draft.

Nicos Poulantzas view of class was based on the distinction between productive and unproductive labour in terms of the production and appropriation of surplus value in every specific historical conjuncture. He referred to the Althusserian category of "*social formation*" which comprises more than one mode of production so one can define more than two classes involved in class struggle by looking at every specific conjuncture. At the more abstract level of analysis one can refer to "pure" classes (capitalist and working class), the antagonistic relation between capital and labour, but in a certain social formation when the analysis is on a lower level of abstraction Poulantzas writes that:

The Marxist theory of social classes further distinguishes *fractions* and *strata* of a class, according to the various classes, on the basis of differentiation in the economic sphere, and of the role, a quite particular one in these cases, of political and ideological relations. The theory also distinguishes social *categories*, defined principally by their place in the political and ideological relations: these include the state bureaucracy, defined by its relation to the state apparatuses, and the intellectuals, defined by their role in elaborating and deploring ideology. These differentiations, for which reference to political and ideological relations is always indispensable, are of great importance;

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<sup>1</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5, emphasis added.



these fractions, strata and categories may often, in suitable concrete conjunctures, assume the rule of *relatively autonomous forces*. It is none the less the case that we are not confronted here with "social groups" external, or above classes. The fractions are class fractions: the commercial bourgeoisie for example is a fraction of the bourgeoisie; similarly, the labour aristocracy is a fraction of the working class. Even social categories have a class membership, their agents generally belonging to several different social classes. This is one of the particular basic points of difference between the Marxist theory and the various ideologies of social stratification that dominate present-day sociology.<sup>1</sup>

Poulantzas's stress on the importance of structural determination made him insist on the importance of class positions in the structure through the social division of labour. This structural determination is responsible for the different class places. On the other hand, in every specific historical conjuncture one can define different class positions and consequently through their analysis adopt certain strategies.

Erik Olin Wright criticised Poulantzas's structural determinism from an analytical-Marxist viewpoint and argued:

...that not all positions within the production process will fall unambiguously into a single class location. In this view, some positions occupy what can be termed "*contradictory locations within class relations*," locations that are objectively torn between classes. Many of the positions commonly labelled "middle class" occupy such contradictory locations. There are two versions of this general stance toward class structure: a version that analyses contradictory locations primarily in terms of the performance of *contradictory functions* within the production process; and a version that analyses these locations in terms of *contradictory structural relations* of domination and subordination within production.<sup>2</sup>

Wright uses the concept of social formation in the way Poulantzas did. He also -as Poulantzas did- rejects the category of wage-earners as a blanket term not helpful for analysis of specific conjunctures and also because it implied a polarized notion of class; the wage-earners on the one hand and the capitalist class on the other without any reference to what Marx called the "*ideological classes*".<sup>3</sup> His main criticism of Poulantzas is the distinction the latter makes between productive and unproductive labour. As Wright put it:

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<sup>1</sup>Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, New Left Books, London, 1975, pp. 23-24.

<sup>2</sup>Erik Olin Wright, "Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of Class Structure", *Politics and Society*, Vol. 9, no 3, 1980, p. 327.

<sup>3</sup>See Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1983, p. 420.

If one is to place two positions within the social division of labor into different classes on the basis of economic criteria, then these positions must have fundamentally different class interests at the economic level. Is this plausible for the distinction between productive and unproductive labor in general? Both productive and unproductive labor are exploited, in the sense that unpaid labor time is appropriated from them. The only difference is that in the case of productive labor, unpaid labor time is directly appropriated as surplus value, whereas in the case of unproductive labor, unpaid labor merely reduces the cost to the capitalist of appropriating part of the surplus value produced elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

Wright's analysis of the concept of "the new petty bourgeoisie" as occupying a contradictory location is based on his view of possession as a *power relation* and not as an *economic relation of exploitation*. He argued that a contradictory class location should be seen as existing not within the mode of production but between modes of production. Although he rejected Poulantzas's analysis of the distinction between productive and unproductive labour he agreed with him on the distinction between supervisory and non supervisory labour. Wright's analysis was anxious to accommodate every individual in the class structure to a specific location -even a contradictory one. As he argued:

Contradictory "empty spaces" within the social relations of production can be viewed as those positions that have the least determinate relationship to potential class formations, and that are, therefore, most potentially open to influence by class struggle. The polar positions within class relations, however, have the most direct link to potential class organization. While class struggles will still shape the ways in which proletarian "empty places" are actually organized as a class, there is no ambiguity about the class into which they are being organized. A structural class map involving contradictory locations within class relations thus makes possible the differential analysis of ways in which class struggle affects how the positions within that structure become formed into organized classes.<sup>2</sup>

The above structuralist and post-structuralist positions are taken up by the authors of *Facing Up To The Future* with the result that they underemphasise the importance of class struggle in the workplace.<sup>3</sup> If classes are not defined objectively according to their relation to the means of production and their position in the division of labour

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<sup>1</sup>Erik Olin Wright, "Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of Class Structure", op. cit., p. 348.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>3</sup>See *Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit. p. 5.

then the idea of class formation takes predominance over the concept of class structure.<sup>1</sup> The middle classes in the class structure and the importance of 'contradictory class locations' based on income and skill credentials become the most important elements in the formation of hegemonic blocs between classes and fractions ranging from the working class to sections of the bourgeoisie itself. If the question of capitalist exploitation becomes a question of hegemony over capitalist relations of power distribution among classes then capitalism becomes an "open system" with infinite possibilities which in turn suggests that there is no reason to abolish it rather than modify it.

The above are related with the concept of *exploitation*. For Wright exploitation is "...an economically oppressive appropriation of the fruits of the labor of one class by another.",<sup>2</sup> that is an economic and not a social relation. Exploitation together with the concept of the ownership of the means of production are seen as relations of appropriation thus relations of distribution instead of relations of production. Wright suggests that exploitation means appropriation of the fruits of someone else's labour, or its equivalent, consuming more than one produces. A criticism of this notion came from Carchedi who argued that exploitation should not be seen as an economic relation having to do with skills and their appropriation but as a relation of production having to do with who produces for whom and who appropriates what, that is as having to do with the appropriation of surplus product which under capitalism is the struggle over the distribution of surplus value.<sup>3</sup>

For Wright there are two kinds of assets in the capitalist formation which define the position of the middle classes and concerned with on the one hand the ownership of skill assets (prototypically belonging to experts) based on credentials and on the other with per capita share assets or organization assets (prototypically belonging to managers and supervisors). The working class -or what Wright calls the 'uncredentialed and non-managerial employees'- consists, then, of those wage-earners who are exploited both by the owners of skill (the new middle classes) and the owners of organizational assets (the capitalists). Exploitation then has to do with a causal relationship between wealth and poverty not between economic positions. Skill's

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<sup>1</sup>Class structure deals with relations *between* classes in every given mode of production; Class formation refers to the relations *amongst* the class forces in a given social formation, see especially, Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, New Left Books and S&W, London, 1973, p. 70ff; Erik Olin Wright, *Classes*, Verso, London-New York, 1985, pp. 9-10; Erik Olin Wright *et al*, *The Debate on Classes*, Verso, London-New York, 1989.

<sup>2</sup>See Erik Olin Wright, *Classes*, Verso, London-New York, 1985, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>Guglielmo Carchedi, "Class and Class Analysis", in Erik Olin Wright *et al*, *The Debate on Classes*, Verso, London-New York, 1989, p.109.

ownership and the exploitation of skills has little to do with collectivities such as classes; it predominantly focuses on individuals in their capacity to generate income. Class in its turn becomes an occupational group and Wright's neo-Marxist theory is only a step away from bourgeois stratification theory. If this classification is stressed to its limits it supplies some very peculiar outcomes, for example, the unemployed are not exploited since they do not take part in the production process; women too. Both groups would be better off if they left the capitalist society and set up one of their own.

Exploitation serves another purpose too. For Wright an exploitation-centred analysis of classes would make possible the overcoming of the methodological difficulty of the concept of "manipulative oppression", that is, that classes can be defined as relations of oppression and/or domination primarily in terms of the relations generated between individuals. According to the exploitation-centred analysis women's oppression under capitalism does not make them a distinct class. But although Wright's intention is to overcome the oppression-centred approach to classes at the end he only offers a modified version of it by bringing in economic relations alongside personal exploitation.

The concept of exploitation is one of the most important concepts in the classical Marxist theory and is related to the way surplus labour is appropriated in capitalism and the corresponding relations arising from the production process.<sup>1</sup>

The reason we made this extended reference to the above discourses is because we wanted to show that the document's analysis although it claims socialist credentials is incompatible with Marx's analysis although they are using a Marxist phraseology. It is not only that their analysis has little to do with the classical Marxist one -which is not the main problem- but also that their discourse is a mix of contradictory ideas and finally is not helpful for an analysis of the current conjuncture. According to the draft:

Class is produced by the intersection of different kinds of exploitation, which produce different class positions within the workforce.<sup>2</sup>

And further:

An increasing number of people in modern capitalism occupy these contradictory class locations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. III, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1984, pp. 791-2.

<sup>2</sup>*Facing Up To The Future...*, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5.



In the first quotation one notices the influence of Poulantzas's analysis of the formation of class positions. For Poulantzas, different kinds of exploitation, i.e. his distinction between mental and manual labour and supervisory and non-supervisory labour result in different class positions. But in the second quotation Wright's criticism of Poulantzas's theory of class is endorsed. Poulantzas and Wright's analyses to the extent they refer to the formation of classes differ enormously. Both quotations show a confused notion of the above mentioned discourses. On the one hand they refer to a fixed class position produced by different kinds of exploitation and on the other to a contradictory class location. The authors of the draft have not realised that those two conceptions of class determination are mutually exclusive. Either a subject occupies a contradictory class location or a given class position in the conjuncture, but not both at the same time. Consequently in so far as *Facing Up To The Future's* derives its analysis from the above discourses, it seems to generate a belief in the non-importance of class politics. As the draft put it:

The importance of these contradictions within the workforce means that class cannot straightforwardly provide the collective interest for modern socialism. As importantly, *there is no such thing as a "pure" class identity. Everyone comes to their sense of their class through their sense of gender and ethnicity, as well as regional and religious attachments.*<sup>1</sup>

The stress on the non-centrality of class brings to mind the "old revisionist" debate of the 1950s and 1960s. Now, as then, the advocates of the revisionist thesis in order to defend their notion of the non-existence of an objectively defined class identity move closer to the Weberian sociological view of *status*.<sup>2</sup> According to Weber this is a *social relation* as opposed to *class* which is an *economic relation*. *Facing Up To The Future* although it does not make any reference to Weber, is closer than it might seem to be to a Weberian logic rather than a Marxist one. Both in structuralism and in analytical-Marxism, Weber's problematic is present in the analyses of class to the extent classes are treated as occupational and distributional groups based on income differentials generated in the market (relations of distribution) and not on the relations of production. This kind of approach is adopted by *Facing Up To The Future* first in the endorsement of analytical-Marxism and second in its understanding of a common class situation generated from a sharing common life chance based on a common

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 5, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>See Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1964.

market capacity. A class situation<sup>1</sup> in Weber refers firstly to separate individuals' life experiences and then deducts from this the general concept of class, thus the adoption of a methodological individualism so common to Weber's epistemology and to the *Facing Up To The Future* analysis.

The document's insistence on religion, gender and ethnicity as equally important factors in determining one's class situation is questionable. For example a black worker might come to his/her understanding of exploitation as a black and as a worker only by reference to the process of the reproduction of his/her existence and not only by his/her experience of exploitation as a black person. A black person could become a capitalist no matter his/her colour. Or to claim that:

Exploitation through work is not the only determinant of how power and resources are distributed...The preponderance of women and ethnic minority workers in low-wage, low-skilled jobs *cannot* be explained by capitalist exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

is problematic. Capitalism was able to incorporate certain forms of exploitation (e. g., patriarchy) into the system and successfully transform them in order to serve the system. One cannot convincingly argue that the exploitation of women in capitalism is not primarily a capitalist exploitation. One could possibly argue that women's exploitation cannot *solely* be explained by capitalist exploitation rather than dismissing the latter altogether, as the draft does.

The authors of *Facing Up To The Future* belief in no objectively defined or "pure" class identity coupled with the decline of the manual workforce, which is for them *the* working class *per se*, makes them anxious to seek for other social forces with which to make alliances. The interesting thing is that they separate these forces from the category of class (either *an sich* or *für sich*). For example women are not only a potential social force of opposition in their capacity as oppressed beings, but also a class force and not only a single class force which means that their demands cannot be homogenized across the political spectrum apart only from the legal (formal) point of view (i.e., equal pay for work of equal value) as the realigned Left does. The analysis presented in *Facing Up To The Future* concerning the role of social forces further fragments an already fragile terrain. The issue of class in *Facing Up To The Future* is related with the question of class alliances.

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<sup>1</sup>For the concept of 'class situation', see Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1968, p. 302; for its similarities with the ideas put forward in the Communist Party's draft, see *Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 5, emphasis added.

The decline of traditional struggle and the rise of novel forms of struggle have produced a crisis of representation and organisation among the opposition to Thatcherism.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, there is seemingly a need for a broad-based organisation of the opposition forces into an alliance which is close to Hobsbawm's advocacies of a Popular-Front policies away from class towards popular politics.<sup>2</sup>

As a reflection of the coalition and popular fronts successful policies of the past the success of the Left's project in the future depends -according to the document- on a similar vision.

The key to the future of the opposition to Thatcherism and the character of the Left, will be strategic alliances between the labour movement and popular forces outside it. This will require a transformation of the labour movement's culture.<sup>3</sup>

Their understanding of the working class as a declining group of male industrial workers working in fordist factories, makes them seek a wider spectrum in order to address the "new order". Although they do not explicitly spell out what they mean by "the decline of traditional struggle"<sup>4</sup> one can argue, bearing in mind the beliefs of some of the people helping in drafting the document, Beatrix Campbell for example, and their admiration for "alternative forms of popular struggle",<sup>5</sup> that they refer to trade union militancy and especially to the miners' strike of 1984-85; as for "novel forms of struggle" their preference is to, for instance, the women's peaceful civil disobedience campaign in Greenham Common.<sup>6</sup> Although a socialist strategy should be able to incorporate or be open to new forms of struggle this fact should not exclude the traditional ones when it is right to do so. A direct, militant confrontation (mass strike action, flying picketing, etc.) under certain historical circumstances (militant capitalism) is preferable to passive ones. The women's peaceful struggle had as an effect the awareness of the public in favour of the peace cause but that does not mean

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>See Eric Hobsbawm, "Out of the Wilderness", *Marxism Today*, October 1987, pp. 15-16 and also his *Politics For a Rational Left*, Verso, London, 1989.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>See Beatrix Campbell, "Politics Old and New", *New Statesman*, Vol. 109, 8 March 1985.

that it sets an example for fighting any other demand and also it was not the only form of struggle for people's mobilization cutting across class lines.

A further question is that of the role of the labour movement in such alliances. The Communist Party of Great Britain asks for "a transformation of union culture"<sup>1</sup> because as the authors put it:

The recomposition of the workforce, the influence of new technology, the international competitive forces carried by foreign companies setting up new plants, the ideological and legislative attack on the logic and power of collective action are not separate crises. They are a single, fundamental restructuring of the union's position.<sup>2</sup>

In which case there is a danger that all the trade unions struggles for better wages and working conditions will be baptised as sectarian and sectional because wage militancy is seen as a traditional form of struggle not proper for the "new times". According to the draft, the unions "must operate at the centre of alliances in society rather than as a sectional force."<sup>3</sup> Again, the problem with alliances is their composition from different and differential interests with the minimum requirement of sharing a common purpose, this time opposition to Thatcherism. If the labour movement will not be able to have the hegemonic role then it might not be worth building alliances at all. Marx tackles this problem in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, when he was analysing the situation after the February revolution, the Social democratic party and the betrayal of working class interests by the petty bourgeoisie.

As against the coalesced bourgeoisie a coalition between petty bourgeois and workers had been formed, the so-called social-democratic party.<sup>4</sup>

Marx seems uneasy with the nature of the alliance. He writes:

It had concluded an *alliance* with the socialist leaders. In February 1849, banquets celebrated the reconciliation. A joint programme was drafted, joint election committees were set up and joint candidates put forward. From the social demands of the proletariat the revolutionary point was broken off and a democratic turn given to them; from the democratic claims of the petty bourgeoisie the purely political form was

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<sup>1</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 39.



stripped off and their socialist point thrust forward. Thus arose the *Social-Democracy*.<sup>1</sup>

But what happened then when a coalition of differential interests takes place?

The peculiar character of the Social-Democracy is epitomised in the fact that democratic republican institutions are demanded as a means, not of doing away with two extremes, capital and wage labour, but of weakening their antagonism and transforming it into harmony. However different the means proposed for the attainment of this end may be, however much it may be trimmed with more or less revolutionary notions, the content remains the same. This content is, the transformation of society in a democratic way, but a transformation *within* the bounds of the petty bourgeoisie.<sup>2</sup>

One might argue that the situation in today's Britain is different from the situation in 1848's France. But this difference lies mainly in the form and not in the content of the state. The central problem is still the pressures and recompositions taking place within the framework of "*bourgeois republicanism*" as a political system of class power. The parliamentary system under Louis Philippe was a coalition of interests which permitted the traditional monarchists, bourgeois republicans, petit-bourgeois democrats and proletarian social democrats to express their class interests and simultaneously to be integrated into the rule of the political game. The revolutionary upheaval of the proletariat against the National Assembly, the defeat of Blanqui and June's revolt led to the establishment of the bourgeois republican system; a system capable of succeeding in creating a new division: the division between financialists, industrialists, middle class, peasantry and lumpen elements on the one hand and the town proletariat on the other.

On the one hand stood the "Party of Order" and on the other hand the "Party of Anarchy" or the "Red Party". This separation did not prove successful because the working class was not able to seize power yet. The situation led to a "new order" which exceeded parliamentary limits in order to become at the end of the day a dictatorship, and in that specific historical period, what Marx called: *Bonapartism*. The specific characteristics of this "true religion of the bourgeoisie" were the high centralization of the state apparatus, the increase of the executive power over the legislative, bureaucracy that also served as a depository of votes and finally the completion of the separation of the state from society.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

Bonapartism emerged as a result of an unstable equilibrium between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, in Marx's words:

...the Second Empire was the form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost and the working class had not yet acquired the faculty of ruling the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Bonapartism was according to Marx's analysis an *exceptional form* of the capitalist state. And it was exceptional because it emerged as a response to a certain crisis, an economic one which had as a counter-result a political one. A semi-dictatorship was the only solution possible at that time. The army had been called in to save bourgeois law and order. The supporting role of the army in modern times is being replaced by the police force as Gramsci argued in his analysis of modern Bonapartism, that is: "*Caesarism*".<sup>2</sup>

The betrayal of working class interests in these alliances made Marx and Engels suspicious of the value of alliances. The problem is how a democratic rule is able to emancipate the working class -the evaluating element- and how historical circumstances -the objective element- resist programmes of immediate emancipation based on compromise solutions (alliances, coalitions, hegemonic blocs). What does *Facing Up To The Future* have to contribute to this discussion?

The answer could be traced in the analysis of the role of the state in the document. "*New Times*" are asking for a combination of three models of the state which emerged in *Facing Up To The Future*. The first one is a *Regulatory* state, the second an *Interventionist* and the third one an *Enabling* state. All these models, in the long run, are reduced to a familiar one, a liberal state for the "New Times". A Regulatory state that interferes in the economy cannot be other than an interventionist one and an enabling state that does things with people ends up by regulating their activities. Although the authors of the draft claim an anti-statist image for themselves the contradictions of the document point to hidden *étatisme*.

The nature of the State is not discussed in the *Facing Up To The Future*. On the contrary, the draft presented the state in its liberal -and revisionist- tradition as *neutral*. Everything depended on who has the control of the administrative/political power of the State and the political will to transform the political institutions. This notion by-

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1962, p. 518.

<sup>2</sup>For the concept of "caesarism" see Chapter III and also Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, op. cit.

passes the classical Marxist analysis of the state functions as the outcome of the specific mode of production and consequently the state's class nature.

Here are some hints as to the state's nature and role in the document:

The state's role must primarily be *enabling*. To enable people to come up with their own chosen solutions to problems through a plurality of autonomous collective organisations in society. The enabling state would have to be genuinely plural - it cannot be a subsidisation of leftwing causes. The *aim* would be to promote cultural and social change from within society.<sup>1</sup>

But few lines further on:

The Left's aim should be to promote responsible self regulation to give people the resources and tools to take control of the situation for themselves *in alliance with the state*.<sup>2</sup>

This *enabling* state will retain a central role in regulating economic decisions together with the market and the individual consumer's choices within a decentralized framework. In order to cope with Post-Fordism -the authors of the draft claim- the Left should develop a vision of "*democratic modernization*". This is to be analysed in its different components: economic, social, political and international. Modernization according to the draft means:

Democratic modernization cannot just offer collective solutions. It must guarantee a clear place to individuals. It must guarantee a set of rights and entitlements to life chances, recognize the basic democratic importance of individual choices in consumption, lifestyle, housing and sexuality, as well as in politics.<sup>3</sup>

In this discussion, modernization suggests not modernism but post-modernity. The modernist movement of the early decades of the 20th century is at an end. Now it is the era of "*post-modernism*".<sup>4</sup> which is moving from discourse theory to the "surface" theory. Fredric Jameson<sup>5</sup>, Jean-Francois Lyotard<sup>6</sup> and Jean Baudrillard<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 10, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup>For a critique of "post-modernism", see Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989.

<sup>5</sup>See Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1971; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Methuen, London, 1981; Fredric Jameson, "Marxism and Post-Modernism", *New Left Review*, no 176, 1989.

are the theorists for the "new times" and for "a new cultural logic of capital". Progress, development, rationality and enlightenment's strange deaths as "grand narratives" were replaced by nostalgia for history, aesthetic values by kitsch and so on. This new modernization refers always to a "*post*": "post-capitalist", "post-class" society and most of all *past-socialist*. I say past and not post-socialist because post-modernism just refuses to envisage a socialist project.

The role of the economy is also discussed in the draft. The "white heat of technology" and the alternative economic strategy are back again. Their designer economic modernization is about coping with new technology and practices.

A key part of socialist modernisation must be the development of a *new economic strategy*. This would aim at a continuing modernisation of the economy to make it more internationally competitive...relations of economic power will have to be transformed through *regulation, social ownership, economic democracy and state intervention*.<sup>1</sup>

The role of the market was highly praised in the document. Their micro-economic policy was about developing or better "modernising the productive, economic base"<sup>2</sup> and in order to achieve this aim they ask for a decentralisation of initiatives and strategies. As they put it:

The need for decentralisation in turn implies that the *market* will play an important role, simply because it is the *best* way to co-ordinate lots of economic decisions, and to ensure that production responds to *consumer choices*.<sup>3</sup>

But they had to admit that the market left to itself creates inequality, so a *regulatory state* will step in to control it. As they insist:

Control will not be achieved through a single policy. It will require a mix of measures to reshape the economy - through democratic regulation, social ownership, and other measures of economic democracy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984.

<sup>7</sup>Jean Baudrillard, *Le système des objets*, Gallimard, Paris, 1968; Jean Baudrillard, *La société de consommation, ses mythes, ses structures*, Gallimard, Paris, 1970; Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, Telos, St Louis, 1975; Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Telos, St Louis, 1981.

<sup>1</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 6, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.



The idea of *market socialism*<sup>1</sup> emerges in the draft. Their emphasis on "consumer choices", "the market", and the shift of power from producers towards retailers make the authors of the draft to insist on the decline of the dominance of production.

It is here, "close to the consumer", that key decisions are being made about what should be produced. *Production is losing its old dominance.*<sup>2</sup>

It is not clear here why the role of production is subordinate *vis-à-vis* the significance of distribution. The primacy of distribution rather than production is an old social democratic characteristic. Marx refers to this in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. He wrote that:

Quite apart from the analysis so far given, it was in general a mistake to make a fuss about so-called *distribution* and put the principal stress on it. Any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves. The latter *distribution*, however, is a feature of the mode of production itself.<sup>3</sup>

The authors' stress on consumer choice and the decline of the importance of production in the "New Times" in favour of distribution leads straight on not to a socialist but to a mixed economy and the 'new commanding heights' of the economy have nothing to do with nationalisation and the redistribution of wealth and power but rather with "retailers and marketing companies"<sup>4</sup> who control the corporate power.

In many sectors the key power lies with retailers and marketing companies, rather than producers. These are the new commanding heights of the economy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For the theory of "market socialism", see Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1983; Julian Le Grand and Saul Estrin (eds) *Market Socialism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989; David Miller, *Market, State and Community, Theoretical Foundations of Market Socialism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989; for a critique see Ernest Mandel, "The Myth of Market Socialism", *New Left Review*, no 160, 1988; Pat Devine, "Market Mania of the Left", *Marxism Today*, June 1988; Diane Elton, "Market Socialism or Socialization of the Market?", *New Left Review*, no 172, 1988.

<sup>2</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 7, emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx, *Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers' Party*, [*Critique of the Gotha Programme*], in Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>See *Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

Here economic power is solely related with *decisional autonomy*. Also the notion of "consumer choice" refers to another separation between consumer and producer. It is also unclear whether a consumer -who is a producer too- is able to have a choice that he/she does not have as a producer? These sorts of questions are not addressed in the draft. Of a special interest is the handling of the issue of technology in the draft. The document is shot through with a *technological determinism*; everything seems to depend on the force of new technology. The document's technological determinism is obvious to the extent that it takes current technological forms as the teleological aim of capitalism in this era. That is, those changes in technology mark the transition to post-fordism (automation) from the previous mode of fordist production (semi-automatic assembly line) and there is nothing to be done. The only "resistance" the draft offers is "adaptation" to the new circumstances but if one is looking at technology from a different angle, that is not as solely an economic relation which is a relation of power, but as a social relation that is a relation of exploitation, of domination and of crisis, then the path one follows is totally different.

New technology or technological changes do not carry a moral value. They are neither bad nor good without suggesting that they are neutral. Technology as a social relation is shaping and simultaneously is being shaped by societal relations of conflicting interests which are always class interests.

Technology carries an emancipatory element in itself and this should be emphasised. Certainly the windmill is a characteristic form of production in a feudal society and the steam engine in a capitalist one but things are not so straightforward. Behind the windmill and steam power complex relationships are taking place and make those inventions run.

According to the classical Marxist position the Left's strategy should not rely upon the support of abstract consumers in abstraction from the emancipation of concrete producers. The alternative to enterprise culture and popular capitalism should not be about market socialism and "modernized" social ownership. According to the document in order that people to come to terms with the radical changes in the mode of production a democratic regulation of social ownership will be needed.

Democratic external regulation would be accompanied by internal industrial democracy. Thus democratic regulation could have a dynamic of popular involvement which is lacking in most static, statist notions of social ownership. It would *politicise economic decisions*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 7, emphasis added.

This belief is interesting in its separation of the political from the economic. The draft does not seem to take into consideration that economic decisions are already political because of their influence on state actions.

It is not clear from the draft whether democratic regulation -which refers to the notion of social ownership- means that decisions will be taken collectively by the persons involved in socialised enterprises, which is a form of politicising economic decisions in the sense that the public will be better informed and more involved in the decision making process, or that there will be a more clear cut unification of the political with the economic: that is, that the State will be more explicitly involved in the economic process.

In the document citizens' participation in the decision making is also discussed within the broader framework of citizenship.<sup>1</sup> *Social ownership* is seen not as an *end* but mainly as a *means* "to achieve a different kind of corporate performance".<sup>2</sup> Social ownership mainly refers to the ownership of shares and the development of *popular socialism* as an alternative to Thatcherite *popular capitalism*. The new element is that "social capital markets would have to be established, separate from the stock exchange".<sup>3</sup> Social ownership is also discussed in relation to the crisis of welfarism in its labourist version. As *Facing Up To The Future*, puts it:

...the real crisis of the welfare state is a social crisis.<sup>4</sup>

Which is the product of two factors so that:

...most welfare is still provided within families, or not at all.<sup>5</sup>

And:

...the failure of socialised welfare to adapt to the changes in family resources for welfare provision.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a short introduction to the concept of "citizenship" see J. M. Barbalet, *Citizenship*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1988; in relation to the New Right see Desmond King, *The New Right, Politics, Markets and Citizenship*, Macmillan, London, 1987.

<sup>2</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

Because of these factors a new agenda is needed which will not be about the revival of the welfare state which provided for the worst-off but about a socialised welfare which will give benefits even to the better-off as a matter of support for the strategy of universal social welfare. This position of the draft is related to the idea of *rights as universal* and the notion of *social citizenship*.<sup>1</sup> The formulation of the concept of citizenship in the draft is close to liberal conceptions on the subject. The idea of rights in liberal discourse, implies a society consisting of isolated individuals having to face a powerful authority or each other. Hence, a form of protection is needed for them to go on with their business as usual. Rights historically emerged in bourgeois society and were commonly related to the individual as *property owner*.<sup>2</sup> Although rights seem to apply to all (right to life), they are class based (property). The classical Marxist problematic on the subject of rights casts its doubts on their universal application precisely because the idea of universality did not seem to take into consideration any distinctions in terms of class interests. According to classical Marxism legal documents are always based on a struggle and especially on class struggle. As Marx points out:

Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of "citizenship" cannot simply translate itself into a socialist value solely by the addition of the prefix: "social". Socialism is about individuality and choice but the central point is that both concepts are seen by classical Marxist theory as always socially determined. The socialist individual is a total individual, that is, not the egoistic, alienated and isolated bourgeois abstract individual.<sup>4</sup> "Assertive individualism" cannot simply be replaced by "socialist individualism" based on social citizenship. Classical Marxism rejects the notion of abstract citizenship and raises the question for its transcendence from merely *political* emancipation to *human* emancipation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>See The American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1793; Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>See Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Early Writings*, op. cit.; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1965.

<sup>5</sup>See Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, in *Early Writings*, op. cit., p. 219.



*Facing Up To The Future* trusts that an overcoming of the existing society can be advanced through a system of *proportional representation*. The draft's differentiation from classical Marxism becomes apparent if it is studied in relation to a considerable amount of Marxist literature on the subject of elections, electoral practices and universal suffrage.

Marx in *On The Jewish Question*<sup>1</sup> referred to the representative principle and the type of emancipation it offers. His starting point was "human emancipation" from which he formulated his critique of political (bourgeois) emancipation. A central characteristic of the developed bourgeois state is the negation of mixing up economic private property with the pre-bourgeois elements of privileges and political monopoly. Universal suffrage does not indicate a defeat of private property as such but the defeat of private property in its absolutist form as exclusive privilege. Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* wrote:

Its political demands contain nothing beyond the old democratic litany, familiar to all: universal suffrage, direct legislation, popular rights, a people's militia, etc. They are a mere echo of the bourgeois People's Party, of the League of Peace and Freedom. They are all demands which, in so far as they are not exaggerated in fantastic presentation, have already been *realised*...

This sort "of state of the future" is a present-day state, although existing outside the "framework" of the German Empire.<sup>2</sup>

Engels -as Marx did- was not dismissing the idea that a peaceful road to socialism was possible in certain advanced capitalist countries like England. Universal suffrage and parliamentarism could be possible weapons for emancipation provided that the working class and especially the trade unions movement (there was no workers party in England after the dissolution of the Chartist Organisation) were in position to take advantage. As Engels wrote:

...as the merely political or Chartist Organisation fell to pieces, in the same measure the Trades Unions Organisation grew stronger and stronger, until at present it has reached a degree of strength unequalled by any working-class organisation abroad.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically enough Disraeli's extension of the right to vote fell upon the lack of political consciousness of the British trade unions. As Engels put it:

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *On Britain*, the article "Trades Unions", Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1954, p. 476.

Disraeli's Household Suffrage gave the vote to at least the greater portion of the organised working-class. Would he have proposed it unless he supposed that these new voters would show a will of their own - would cease to be led by middle-class liberal politicians? Would he have been able to carry it if the working-people, in the management of their colossal Trade Societies, had not proved themselves fit for administrative and political work? That very measure opened out a new prospect to the working-class...and thus enabled them to enter into the struggle against capital with new weapons, by sending men of their own class to Parliament. And here, *we are sorry to say, the Trades-Unions forgot their duty as the advanced guard of the working class.* The new weapon has been in their hands for more than ten years, but they scarcely ever unsheathed it...there are plenty of symptoms that the working-class of this country is awakening to the consciousness....that it is not the lowness of wages which forms the fundamental evil, but the wages-system itself. This knowledge once generally spread amongst the working-class, the position of Trades-Unions must change considerably. They will no longer enjoy the privilege of being the only organisations of the working-class. At the side of, or above, the Unions of special trades there must spring up a general Union, *a political organisation of the working-class as a whole.*<sup>1</sup>

Engels seemed to believe that universal suffrage was not a revolutionary weapon as long as the working-class was not able to exploit it. More than that, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* he went even further to argue that, despite the fact of the existence of a revolutionary consciousness and a militant working class, universal suffrage does not necessarily lead to workers' control of the state.<sup>2</sup>

Marx's view of political representation was that it was another form of alienation.

Marx: Asinine! This is a democratic verbiage, political drivell! An election is a political form, both in the smallest Russian commune and in the Artel. The character of the election does not depend on this description, but on the economic basis, the economic interrelations of the electors...<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand Marx and Engels were in favour of universal suffrage because they believed it was a first class weapon for the *political* development of the proletariat's consciousness. Workers by their involvement in political affairs

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 477, emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup>See Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in Marx/Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983

<sup>3</sup>Marx on Bakunin, (1875), KMSW, p. 563, and also in Marx/Engels/Lenin, *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972, pp. 146-152 excerpts from Marx's "The Conspectus of Bakunin's Book *State and Anarchy*" written in 1874 and the beginning of 1875.

(parliament, institutions, clubs, parties) will be able to understand their separate (political) interests and fight for them. They could also bring their own representatives into (the bourgeois) parliament who will be fighting for their class interests.

Apparently Marx and Engels never thought that a communist society will arise because of the emancipatory possibilities of the universal suffrage. On the contrary, it has been seen as another *means* to the workers political understanding and not as a substitute for revolutionary practice as the social democrat reformists see it.

Historically speaking, the right to vote would have brought socialism only by the fact that the majority of voters were workers. But this cannot fit so easily into the reality. Other circumstances have to be taken into account ("false consciousness", the educational system, the level of trade unionism, etc).

The reason for such an extended reference to the issue of the *universal suffrage* was necessary because of the striking similarities between the arguments in favour of the right to vote and the *Facing Up To The Future's* view on *proportional representation*.<sup>1</sup> The authors of the draft were not that far from the 19th century's social democratic idea of the emergence of the socialist millenium due to the working class having been granted the right to vote. Proportional representation is an extension of this idea with the main difference that now an evaluative element is coming into the frame, namely, the idea of *Justice*. Justice in the sense that every political party will take a fair proportion of the vote and if the votes that so far have been "stolen" from left-wing parties come back to them then socialism is a matter of time. *Justice* and *fairness* and most of all the safeguarding of pluralism are the main elements behind the idea of proportional representation.

In the long run, the political system and state power will only reflect the plurality of interests in society with the introduction of proportional representation.<sup>2</sup>

"The plurality of interests" referred to by the draft are mainly a manifestation of the draft's *group approach to politics*, and an implication of *representation crisis*.<sup>3</sup> It is also -as the draft claims- a question of democratic control.

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<sup>1</sup>*Facing Up To The Future*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5.

...the state can be opened to control by more plural interests, through a strategy aimed at promoting *self-management*.<sup>1</sup>

These "plural interests" find their expression in the political sphere. Again it is not clear if this plurality consists of elements that are against the present system or of elements without a long term interest in supporting a socialist project. "Self-management" is another concept which in order to have a meaning, needs the support of a powerful institution, in this case, the State. Having in mind their approach to politics and their notion of *class as a group of 'plural' individuals*, plurality comes down to numerous individual interests which are all important and for that reason equally unimportant in the last analysis. Self-management could possibly work in favour of a specific plan for socialism which, however, the draft does not seem to have in hand or in mind.

The authors of the draft seem to imply that there is a representation crisis in relation to the unfairness of the electoral system. The draft seems to overlook the fact that the electoral system is only a map of representative interests; it does not create them. The discussion of the concept of "representation crisis" is unclear in the draft. The concept of "representation crisis" does not seem to refer to a situation where people cannot be represented through the traditional political organisations because the latter are unable to address the crucial issues, so that the result is a party for almost every separate issue (cf, the political situation in Germany before the rise of Hitler to power) -(which might serve as one possible definition of the concept of "representation crisis"). On the contrary, the draft seems to confuse a lack of proportional representation with the concept of representation crisis. Obviously the introduction of proportional representation might have the effect of bringing to the surface hidden divisions but nonetheless it is only one of the barometers of political life.

Apart from the above issues a part of the document is devoted to internationalism. Perestroika and the EC walk hand in hand in the document. The authors stigmatize British nationalism and Europhobia. Multilateralism, unilateralism and bilateralism move together with the demand for an alternative European defence strategy, which will not have to rely on the USA.

It is interesting how the European Community is construed as an emancipatory force, a forum for socialism in Europe (something like an International of Eurocommunist Socialism). Although the EC is dominated by multinationals the authors of the draft believe that still there is hope in the form of democratic control. As they put it:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 10, emphasis added.



The shape of a more integrated Europe is being determined by international companies because they are able to act in a political void. There are no equivalent democratic institutions capable of controlling them. The Thatcher government's reluctant approach to Europeanisation, rejecting the establishment of strong European economic institutions, only increases the freedom of these companies. The overriding aim of international socialist alliances must be to create a movement for institutions capable of democratically controlling European development. For all its failings, the EC will be the focus for this strategy. The Left must campaign for the democratisation of decision-making within the EC. But to underpin this it must seek out firmer multilateral links with European socialist and communist parties to develop a common approach to Europeanisation. *The Left's agenda must be to expand Europeanisation, rather than resist it.*<sup>1</sup>

The change in the superpowers relationship is another area of consideration. The authors of the draft believe in the decline of the USA's interventionist policy in Europe in favour of the Pacific Rim economies. *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* were the new homelands.

Also the peace movement, ecology and anti-apartheid are portrayed as *popular and progressive humanitarian forces* which could be mobilized for political causes.

Disarmament is on the agenda but not only as a unilateral issue:

Unilateral disarmament of Britain's nuclear capability should remain part of the Left's strategy. But it should be accompanied by strategies for multilateral European moves, as well as bilateral moves to establish co-operative relations with the USSR...Europeanisation should add another dimension to disarmament policy. US bases, for instance, will probably only be removed through developing an *alternative European defence strategy* which does not rely on the United States<sup>2</sup>

*Eurocentrism* is the main theme of the document's internationalism.

And finally the draft addresses the issues of the role of the party and the idea of socialism. It strikes the student of the document that the question of the Party (Communist Party of Great Britain) occupies a space of three short paragraphs where questions of internal affairs (recruitment, expansion, etc.) and a call for moving on to a new phase of political work (analysis of Thatcherism, party modernisation for the "New Times") are posed. As for the issue of Socialism, the authors of the draft are somehow self-critical when they admitted that:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

It is important to locate this strategy along the road to socialism. Socialism will not be made in Britain in the 1990's or the first decade of the next century by this strategy.<sup>1</sup>

And also a statement of what socialism means to the Communist Party can be found below, namely:

democratic, pluralistic, self-managing.<sup>2</sup>

Looking back to the document's title *Facing Up To The Future* could be read (interpreted) in at least two ways, firstly as a challenge to the emerging "New Times" and secondly as a more or less passive description of social trends. Both approaches raise certain critical questions. The first (challenge), because of the nature of the document (adaptation), the second because one cannot describe the future, one can only foresee it in a (utopian) vision.

An issue totally missing from the draft is any notion of *crisis*. It seems that all the transitions from the so-called post war consensus to the present rule took place in a linear form, that is, without rupture or resistance. *Technology* is seen as the *real* or *sole mediator of change* and not as one of the mediators. Technology does not concern only economic relations -which are one aspect of it- but primarily is about societal ones. New technology's development is not neutral in the sense that the introduction of new forms of exploitation like i.e. new machinery and working practices is always crisis ridden. A not so much forgotten example is the British Leyland case and the struggle over "*mutuality*" and "payment for change" and more recently the introduction of new technology in Wapping.<sup>3</sup> The document does not seem aware of these implications of technology except from its negative aspect, that is, the defeat of trade unions demands.

In classical Marxism, crisis is not seen as merely a moment in history but on the contrary as an integral process in a class based society. Crisis can be economic, political or ideological but remains social in the last analysis, an incorporation of all the previous levels. Crisis can be seen in at least two contexts, first as an emancipatory process and secondly as a restructuring of the system. Capitalist crisis contains both elements, depending on the level of class struggle which of these is dominant. If there is any idea of crisis in the document, it is one of interpersonal

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>See "Wapping War", Interview with SOGAT general secretary Brenda Dean by Charles Leadbeater and Paul Webster, *Marxism Today*, March 1986, pp. 52-53.

relations, hence its reference to a "socialist individualism". The document's conception of crisis seems to aiming at defining a socialist alternative approach to "individualism" opposing the one of a Thatcherite "assertive individualism".

The document does not address the question of why individualism has been gaining ground in recent years. Rather it does it in a certain manner, in order to attack collectivism which is taken to mean Labourism. The critique of labourism is important, at the basis of a classical Marxist theory, as a critique of a false interpretation of socialist values and not of socialist values *per se*. Equally questionable is the document's admiration of the present government's record on popular support. It is claimed that this is the outcome of the promotion of the individual's choices. The document does not raise the question whether the issue of choice is separate from its social environment, i.e. do the unemployed have the same choices as others. Choice of lifestyle and sexuality are seen as more important than the enabling power behind them.

These were some of the main points arising from the re-thinking of socialism in both the Labour and the Communist Party of Great Britain. Now we would like to turn our attention to some more recent developments in both the Labour and the Communist parties.

### V. 3. SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Communist Party of Great Britain after, *Facing Up To The Future* in September 1988, in June 1989 came up with another document looking to the *New Times*.<sup>1</sup> As the authors put it:

Our analysis is guided by Marxist concepts, but also by examining ideas and strategies from other political and non-political bodies.<sup>2</sup>

The *Manifesto For New Times, A Communist Party Strategy for The 1990s* (hereafter: *Manifesto*) was prepared as a result of a resolution passed at the Communist Party's 40th National Congress in November 1987, which called for a new edition of *The British Road to Socialism* -the Communist Party's Programme last revised in 1977. At a meeting in September 1988 the Executive Committee of the Communist Party appointed a Commission to prepare a new draft programme.<sup>3</sup> A

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<sup>1</sup>*Manifesto For New Times, A Communist Party Strategy For The 1990s*, Communist Party of Great Britain, London, June 1989.

<sup>2</sup>*Manifesto For New Times*, 1989, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1.

further Executive Committee decided that the document should be regarded as 'a strategy for the 1990s to be debated at congress in November 1989.<sup>1</sup> The document finally became party policy by 112 votes to 86 when the delegates to the 41st Congress on November 25-28, 1989 supported a proposal from the outgoing Executive Committee that the *Manifesto* "be the strategy of the party aimed at stimulating creative, confident, purposeful political debate and action" <sup>2</sup>

The members of the Communist Party of Great Britain's Commission who prepared the draft were: Beatrix Campbell, Marian Darke, Tricia Davis, David Green, Joanna de Groot, Ron Halverson, Steve Hart, Martin Jacques, Charlie Leadbeater, Bert Pearce, Jeff Rodrigues, Mhairi Stewart and Nina Temple<sup>3</sup> (Nina Temple was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1989). As one can notice some of the members who helped in drafting the document *Facing Up To The Future* are not among them. The radical-socialist feminist predominance is apparent in the Commission's profile and in the final shape of the *Manifesto*.<sup>4</sup>

The reasoning for the Communist Party's redrafting of its Programme is given in the introductory section of the *Manifesto*.

Society is entering a new, distinctive phase of development, which we call *new times*...New technology is transforming how people work...Society is going through an epochal change. This restructuring in society requires an equally fundamental restructuring and rethinking of our politics. We should not be fearful of this change -we should embrace it.<sup>5</sup>

The document to a large extent reflected the differential standpoints of the persons draft it; its contradictions are equally obvious compared with *Facing Up To The Future*. In the *Manifesto* the old and the new guard undertook a battle over the reshaping of the Party's image, role and purpose either as a "modern" or a Marxist Party, since they seem to understand those two concepts as mutually exclusive.

As *The Guardian* put it and as the authors admitted, the *Manifesto* is "A draft policy programme representing a break with the past so radical as to take the breath away."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See 7DAYS, Communist Party Weekly, 3 June 1989, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>See 7DAYS, Communist Party Weekly, 2 December 1989, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>*Manifesto For New Times*, 1989, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>See Beatrix Campbell's statements in 7DAYS, Communist Party Weekly, 3 June 1989, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>*Manifesto For New Times*, 1989, op. cit., p. 2, emphasis added.

<sup>6</sup>See *The Guardian*'s clip in the *Manifesto*.



The *Manifesto for New Times* raised among other questions some important issues for the direction of the Communist Party of Great Britain's advance to socialism. The very idea of socialism is replaced by the notion of *republicanism*. "In the long run we assert our commitment to republicanism"<sup>1</sup> and as Charlie Leadbeater wrote in *7DAYS*, the *Manifesto* is "...about a new sort of progressive politics which isn't entirely defined by socialism and which incorporates all sorts of other positions - those of struggle but also of analysis and values."<sup>2</sup> The same line of argument was advanced by Martin Jacques at the 41st Communist Party Congress (25-28 November 1989) when he introduced the *Manifesto* to the delegates. For Jacques "Socialism can only describe part of what we want. It is one tradition among several which must be central to making new times better times".<sup>3</sup>

It is observed here that the process of re-alignment had started more than a decade ago with the 1977 Eurocommunist Programme, *The British Road to Socialism* adopted by the 35th Party Congress, and demonstrated especially in the contributions to *Marxism Today* under the editorship of Martin Jacques who took over from James Klugmann in January 1978. The analysis of "Thatcherism" as this was developed in the pages of the above journal was quite comfortably accommodated in *Facing Up To The Future* and the *Manifesto for New Times*. The main difference between the two documents is that the first follows the logic of technological determinism; social change was directly translated as the result of changes in technology (Post-Fordism). The second document follows rather the logic of British radical-socialist feminism.<sup>4</sup> The slogan that the future "should be feminist or not at all" tended to replace the old one that "the future should be socialist or not at all". To define socialism as a question of power and powerlessness and to place women against men instead of placing women against the transformed ideology of patriarchy in capitalism and in the last analysis against capitalism as such can be potentially hazardous. In the logic of the second document seems to be that the enemy is just the individual man in the home, factory or the office instead of the system that (re)produces him.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Manifesto For New Times*, 1989, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>See *7DAYS*, Communist Party Weekly, 3 June 1989, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>See *7DAYS*, Communist Party Weekly, 2 December 1989, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>See *Manifesto For New Times*, 1989, op. cit., p. 19 and also B. Campbell's remarks in *7DAYS*, 3 June 1989, p. 8 where among others she claims that: "The *Manifesto* draws on the way in which feminism has disrupted the notion of singular causes -that there is this thing called 'class exploitation' and everything is a function of that...(the *Manifesto*) draws heavily on the culture of feminism, but also other theoretical challenges to Marxism within the left."

<sup>5</sup>By saying this I am not suggesting that struggles over changing individual behaviour are unimportant; quite the contrary, agitation and rebellion are necessary but these

Another issue for consideration is the commonality between the Communist Party's strategies for the 1990s as these were outlined in their re-thinking documents with the Labour Party's Policy Review. *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change: A new agenda for Britain*<sup>1</sup>, is the final report of Labour's Policy Review for the 1990s, the outcome of the seven working groups' two years' re-thinking of socialism. The Report was published in May 1989 and was adopted as official party policy at the Labour Party Conference in October 1989. In June 1990 a new document entitled *Looking To The Future*<sup>2</sup> was published by the Labour Party as a strategy for the 1990s and as a sort of election Manifesto. What is common to all these documents is a tribute to a fictional person called the "consumer". Mass production, mass consumption and embourgeoisement in affluence were embodied in the Keynesian Welfare State's ideology of universal provision. Martin Jacques claimed that:

The new working class is very different from the white, male, full-time predominantly manufacturing class of the '50s and early '60s...It is not only a producing class, but also a consuming class, more and more aware of its consuming identity.<sup>3</sup>

The same is true for the Labour Party's Policy Review document *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change*, (1989) where one whole chapter is devoted to consumers' interests entitled: *A Commitment to Excellence*, Report of the Policy Review Group on Consumers and the Community.<sup>4</sup> The authors of the above report claimed that they "see the role of government not just as provider but as an *enabler*...and all the time, it must *put the consumer first*."<sup>5</sup> Also in the *Introduction* to the Policy Review, written by Neil Kinnock, the Labour Party is referred as "the party of the consumer" and the public is reassured that this was always the case, that is:

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should be a part of a broader project. Individual struggles by individual women against individual men can only be a personal issue; for the latter to become political it has to be related to a broader issue which is the overcoming of all exploitation, a necessary condition of which is the overthrowing of the system that produces and reproduces it, namely capitalism.

<sup>1</sup>*Meet the Challenge, Make the Change*, Labour Party, London, May 1989.

<sup>2</sup>*Looking To The Future*, The Labour Party, London, June 1990, notice here the similarities of the Labour's document title with the Communist Party's document entitled *Facing Up To The Future*, (September 1988) similarities which, in reality go far beyond the title itself.

<sup>3</sup>See 7DAYS, Communist Party Weekly, 2 December 1989, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>*Meet the Challenge, Make the Change, A new agenda for Britain*, The Labour Party, London, May 1989, pp. 41-55.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 42.

In the past, Labour has had the reputation of being more concerned with protecting the interests of the producers of goods and services rather than the interests of consumers. That was never accurate.<sup>1</sup>

Seemingly both Parties' re-thinking is dominated by the liberal ideology of the articulation of the national interest across classes. In the *Manifesto* there is the idea of "popular humanism" as against Thatcherite popular capitalism and of "universal human values" as having "primacy over class divisions".<sup>2</sup> Humanism is not an innovation of the British Left of the 1990s. E. P. Thompson in the 1950s introduced the concept of "socialist humanism" which became the catchword of the New Left in the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> "Socialist humanism" was supposed to contrast with the authoritarian socialism of the 'actually existing socialist' countries by giving the primacy to the "people" as rational human beings, as opposed to the people as *Träger* of structures. Althusser criticised this current of humanitarian socialists in his theory of history as a 'process without a subject' and in his concept of "theoretical anti-humanism".<sup>4</sup> Popular humanism for the 1990s is again about *subjects* not *agents*, and gives priority to individuals in their capacity as persons which is not very distant from the old hippie idea of the 1960s which called for "power to the people"; in reality many of the persons who advocate these ideas today belong to this generation of disillusioned revolutionary utopians.

Another point of interest is the distinction made between Thatcherism and capitalism in all the above documents but especially in the Communist Party's. Capitalism is seen as an economic system but Thatcherism as a politico-ideological phenomenon. Cultural forms are seen as being "classless" and class struggle as not constructing subjects. "Contemporary culture" John Urry writes, "permits an extraordinary heightened availability of social situations, events, myths and images which cohere around and 'construct' diverse 'subjects', not merely the class-subject beloved by socialists..."<sup>5</sup> If there is this "sense of classlessness" then individuals

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>*Manifesto For New Times*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>See, E. P. Thompson's contributions to the *Universities and Left Review* and *The New Reasoner*, see also E. P. Thompson (ed) *Out of Apathy*, NLB and Steven & Sons Ltd, London, 1960. For a discussion on the concept of "socialist humanism", see Erich Fromm (ed), *Socialist Humanism*, Allen Lane, Penguin Press, London, 1967.

<sup>4</sup>See Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, Allen Lane, Penguin Press, London, 1969, esp. ch. 7, Marxism and Humanism.

<sup>5</sup>See John Urry, "Disorganised Capitalism", *Marxism Today*, October 1988, (special issue on "New Times"), p. 33.

gain predominance over collectivities and the latter are dismissed as totalitarian. It is interesting that in the late fifties Stuart Hall wrote an article entitled "A Sense of Classlessness" where he advanced the same ideas as the advocates of "New Times", Stuart Hall being one of them.<sup>1</sup> Charlie Leadbeater's understanding of socialist individualism captures successfully the theoretical presuppositions of the concept of "new times".

The Left's case stands on that link between the individual and the collective...The link has been broken by these three developments: the loss of trust in the state's ability to act as the guardian of collective social interests; the decay of traditional sources of solidarity and common identity forged through work; the growth in the importance of individual choice in consumption, the revolt against centralising sameness, the pursuit of diversity...the Left needs an alternative individualism...for putting individual interests at the centre of socialist strategy.<sup>2</sup>

What emerges from the above discussions is that "redesigner"<sup>3</sup> socialists's methodological premises reduce the socially transformative impetus of their theories, thus risking contradiction even within their own terms.

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<sup>1</sup>See Stuart Hall, "A Sense of Classlessness", *Universities and Left Review*, no 4, Autumn 1958, pp. 26-32.

<sup>2</sup>Charlie Leadbeater, "Power To The Person", *Marxism Today*, October 1988, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>In 1989 Channel 4 broadcasted a programme on the Communist Party's new image, see the pamphlet accompanying the series: "*Next Left*": *Redesigning Socialism*, BSS and Network Scotland for Channel 4, February 1989.



## CHAPTER VI: EPILOGUE

In this chapter an evaluation of the use of the previously discussed Marxist categories of analysis will be explored and an effort will be made to understand why and how the theoretical debates of the 1950s revived in the 1980s.

The debates of the 1950s on the "affluent society" and the deproletarianisation of the working class, or as it is also known the *embourgeoisement* thesis, were resurrected in the 1980s but in the context of recession rather than affluence. This process of re-thinking had its roots in the "old-revisionist" debates of the 1950s and the "technocratic collectivism" of the 1960s and early 1970s. At the heart of most of the last half century's debates is the idea of socialism and how it is defined. The future of socialism was a matter of debate ever since the early days of the movement's birth. For Marx it was the real movement of history; for the utopians it was an ideal; for Lenin it meant electrification plus soviets. For Herbert Morrison socialism was "whatever the Labour Party seemed to do at any time", for the Left of the Labour Party it was about public ownership and the defence of its symbol, Clause IV (4) of the Labour Constitution; for the New Left of the 1950s socialism was about humanism, the predominance of the subject over structures. For Althusserian Marxism, it was about "theoretical anti-humanism" and the primacy of objectivity; for the New Left of the 1960s and 1970s it became a matter of an intellectual intervention in the political process.

The two strands of socialism mainly presented in this thesis are social democracy and democratic socialism. The pre-Bad Godesberg (1959) social democracy preserves an old-style orthodox, i. e., classical Marxist flavour. Democratic socialism on the other hand, has almost exclusive associations with the present time. Social democracy puts the stress on 'social' as opposed to merely political, or liberal democracy; democratic socialism puts the stress on the 'democratic' so as to highlight the differences between its own kind of socialism and other 'undemocratic' variants. Gradually the differences between social democracy with its equation of socialism with social justice and democratic socialism with its emphasis on freedom become eliminated.

For the Labour Party in the 1950s socialism was defined in terms of social justice and equality; it was still about social democracy. In the 1980s it was made clear that the Labour Party was in favour of democratic-socialism, placing the emphasis on freedom rather than equality as the ultimate goal.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>As Roy Hattersley put it in his book, *Choose Freedom, The Future of Democratic Socialism*, Michael Joseph, London 1987, p. 22, italics in the original: "As we have

The Communist Party in the 1950s was still in favour of a classless society whereas in the 1980s 'polycentrism' and the belief in the working class as the agent of change were replaced by 'polysubjectism' and republicanism.

The political implications of the 1970s became clear in the 1980s debates on the role of the working class, on the nature of the state and the advance to socialism. The convergence of both parties' ideologies is illustrated in their vision of socialism in what they see as the era of "post-Fordism". Marxism was abandoned as outdated in the era of post-modernism and discursive subjectivity. The end of ideology<sup>1</sup> debate of the 1950s is echoed in Fukuyama's proclamation of the final victory of capitalist ideology over socialism, which for him signalled the 'end of history'.<sup>2</sup>

One of the main points I would like to raise in this thesis is the transformation in the classical Marxist categories of analysis which have been used to justify political shifts. In those shifts away from classical Marxism, a great deal of liberal thinking was injected having as a result a move towards a conflicting terminology and meaning. Marxist categories -in accordance to Marx's own intentions- are the categories of a class divided society and its contradictions. Liberal discourse -on the contrary- whenever it puts the stress on divided societies does so not in terms of class antagonism, of conflicting interests arising from the mode of production, but rather from perceptions of the individual's interests and human nature; those interests are not necessarily irreconcilable.

The answer to the question of how do the classical Marxist categories of analysis as used in the Left's debates in the 1980s serve to justify a shift to the right can be analysed in relation to the debates on class and the concepts used in grasping material relations theoretically. The "old-revisionists" understanding of class was based more on status inequalities rather than class divisions and it was explicitly anti-Marxist contrary to the "new-revisionism" of the 1980s whose approach was Marxist oriented. On the basis of the classical Marxist theory the concept one should look for in order to understand the current approaches of political analysis is that of surplus value, the cornerstone of classical Marxism, and consequently its social manifestation as exploitation. In the 1980s the relevance of the concept of surplus value in the

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*evangelised for equality we should made clear that without it, for a majority of the population, the promise of liberty is a cruel hoax. Liberty is our aim. Equality is the way in which it can truly be achieved. It is time that we made our ideological purpose clear".*

<sup>1</sup>See Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology, On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Free Press, New York, 1965 (c1962).

<sup>2</sup>See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?", *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, Washington D. C., USA.

understanding of the capitalist formation disappeared from the Communist Party of Great Britain's analysis. Instead a whole lot of other peripheral concepts came into play, such as the understanding of the way people subordinated by capitalism is seen as "domination" or "oppression" on an individual subjectivist rather than a class objective basis.

The Labour Party's understanding of class and the state which was based on the understanding of class as an occupational group and the state as a neutral institution was discussed throughout this thesis.

One of the main problems of grasping theoretically -according to classical Marxism- the way people are subordinated by the capitalist formation is that of an analysis of the way people enter into relations of exploitation. Relations of exploitation arise out of the mode of production in every social formation. Under the capitalist system of production the main antagonism is between capital and labour and takes the form of exploitation through the appropriation of surplus labour in the form of surplus value, which is realised as profit in the sphere of circulation but only after first originating during the process of the production of commodities. The Labour Party's analysis does not adopt this standpoint. It rather starts from the point of distribution and analyses the relations appearing there as a consequence of the possession of different market assets, i.e., skills and wealth, that is as relations arising not from the way people produce but from the way they consume/distribute the social product. Need is seen as social need in its eleemosynary version, that is from the standpoint of a theory of morality for the "worst off", the "underdog". Crosland's and most of the "old-revisionist's" theoretical approach to the post-war Britain's class divisions stressed status inequalities as arising primarily from policies promoting unequal opportunities.<sup>1</sup> The category used by the old-revisionism was that of equality. Equality and justice were the ends of a free society and freedom was the means to achieve it. In the 1980s freedom became the end and equality the means to achieve it.<sup>2</sup> From the standpoint of classical Marxist, inevitably if the stress is put either on freedom or equality one moves away from the category of exploitation as generated in the process of production towards the categories of subordination, and oppression which are only "subjective" manifestations of the way people live their exploitative relationships from the workplace to their private lives. That is, from the standpoint of classical Marxism, the concept of exploitation is not only an economic

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<sup>1</sup>See C. A. R. Crosland, *The Future of Socialism*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1956, pp. 218-238.

<sup>2</sup>See Roy Hattersley, *Choose Freedom*, op. cit.

category but also a social one related to the concept of alienation and its particular manifestation as the fetishism of commodities in the capitalist mode of production.

Exploitation is a concept specific to the capitalist mode of production and is directly related to the specific form of expropriation of labour power in the form of *surplus value*.<sup>1</sup> It is based on legal equality and freedom; thus it is not the domination of legally subordinated subjects, whose paid labour (subsistence expenses) was considered to be unpaid too. It is not oppression as in feudal-lordship because in this case unpaid labour in the feudal lands (*lattifundia*) was separated from work in personal land which in the last analysis was not owned by the labourer; its relation with it was *a relation of use*. Marx did not use "exploitation" as a moral, evaluative, concept. Nor did he write of *people* being exploited, in the vague, humanistic sense that has become commonplace since, meaning any kind of *manipulative oppression*. Contrary to the classical Marxist theory's approach and relevant to our discussion of the Left's use of the Marxist categories of analysis are the theoretical approaches for and against the use of the concept of exploitation as this was taken in Erik Olin Wright *et al*, *The Debate on Classes*.<sup>2</sup> Wright's post-structuralist, analytical-Marxist view on the understanding of class and exploitation was adopted by the Communist Party of Great Britain both in its *Facing Up To The Future* (1988) and *Manifesto For New Times* (1989) where the concept of exploitation is used as if it is a *quantitative* measure of class antagonism.<sup>3</sup> As for the Labour Party's Policy Review there is no reference to the concept of exploitation since they dropped any kind of class analysis and adopted a citizenship approach. Coming back to the main theorists discussed in this thesis and their views on the subject of exploitation, according to Poulantzas exploitation is a concept related to the *way* surplus value is created; for him exploited are only those employees whose surplus value is extracted *directly* in the process of production. This is what Poulantzas understood as "productive labour". "Unproductive labour" does not produce any direct relations of exploitation.

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<sup>1</sup>For the concept of "surplus value", see Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Parts I and II (Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1969) and Part III, (Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1972); Andrew Gamble and P. Walton, *From Alienation to Surplus Value*, Sheed and Ward, London, 1976; Ernest Mandel, *Marxist Economic Theory*, Merlin Press, London, 1971; Ernest Mandel, *The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, 1843 to Capital*, New Left Books, London, 1971; Ian Steedman and Paul Sweezy, *The Value Controversy*, Verso, London, 1981; Isaac Rubin, *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, Black and Red, Detroit, 1971.

<sup>2</sup>See Erik Olin Wright *et al*, *The Debate on Classes*, Verso, London-New York, 1989; see also our Review of Wright's *et al* book in *Capital & Class*, no 41, Summer 1990, pp. 147-150.

<sup>3</sup>See *Facing Up To The Future*, *Marxism Today*, September 1988, p. 5.



Commercial employees are an example.<sup>1</sup> Ernesto Laclau dismisses the concept of exploitation as economistic and prefers to refer to *subordination*. He and Mouffe understand by *a relation of subordination* that in which an agent is subjected to the decisions of another.<sup>2</sup> Bob Jessop prefers to discuss not the relations of exploitation but those of hegemonic domination; his approach is half-way between a structuralist and a neo-Gramscian understanding of exploitation.<sup>3</sup> The concept of exploitation can be generally found in the writings of those theorists who adopt a class-based approach rather than a status or citizenship analysis of the state.

The problem with the above theorists' approach to the concept of exploitation lies with its implications for political practice. The Communist Party's analysis of exploitation as a purely economic category in *Facing Up To The Future* (1988) restricts exploitative relations only to the workplace and so skips any understanding of these relations as class relations which have an impact beyond the immediate process of production, as well as rejecting the importance of class analysis in favour of atomized understandings of class exploitation. The same is true with Laclau's approach to the relations of subordination. Laclau and Mouffe suggest that it is the presence of 'a discursive exterior',<sup>4</sup> that gives meaning to any understanding of social relations; the latter then become a matter of subjective interpretation. As for Poulantzas's distinction between 'productive' and 'unproductive' labour -although useful in principle, problematic in practice- it is not without difficulties since it implies that the way surplus value is created (directly/indirectly) determines class positions. Wright's 'contradictory locations' theory of class was discussed in Chapter V; what should be remembered here is that the way Wright uses the concept of surplus value restricts exploitation to the distributional level. Exploitation depends on who *appropriates* the surplus product rather than on classes which *produce* for other classes. Jessop's approach is based on the concept of hegemony and relations of domination but although he rejects Laclau's post-Marxist analysis he is not keen in discussing exploitation as arising from the mode of production, this having an economic stigma. Relations of hegemony can be seen as relations of domination but not exploitation because when one speaks of hegemonic blocs one refers to the level

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<sup>1</sup>See Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, NLB, London, 1977, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup>See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Verso, London, 1985, pp. 153-4.

<sup>3</sup>See Bob Jessop, *State Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990.

<sup>4</sup>Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, op. cit., p. 154.

of social formation rather than that of class determination; that is, hegemonic relations are not necessarily economically -in terms of material interests- exploitative.

Problematic also is the use of the concepts of oppression and exploitation is their tendency to fragment the working class by differentiating it into positions of oppression and domination according to the subjective feeling of those particular situations and further more in terms of gender and race. On the contrary the concept of exploitation is a unifying one not in the sense of homogenisation and reduction of all kinds of domination and oppression to class but in the sense of the unified *form* of capitalist exploitation which obtains over the bearers of the capitalist structure. Forms of oppression and domination still exist under capitalism but are reformulated in order to serve the system, e. g. patriarchy

Exploitation is the cement of the existence of the capital-labour relation. Without the extraction of surplus value for the sake of capital unpaid labour takes a different meaning according to how it is used. Surplus labour is not a characteristic of capitalism alone. An amount of surplus in the form of surplus product is always required for the reproduction of society; the problem is how and for whose benefit it is extracted.

So, if one looks at capitalism today, and specific capitalist formations, and if one takes as an example the British state how far are we from the Marxist definition and analysis of capitalism and the relevance of the Marxist concepts of analysis? In what sense might the Marxist concepts of class and exploitation be relevant in connection with politics in Britain today?

Capitalist rule is an explicit class rule in this era. The capitalist state made public its character in response to the challenge to its basis from the working class. A totalitarian tendency under the cover of neo-liberalism is under way. Liberal capitalist forms of representation are continuously shrinking. The corridors of power have replaced the House of power. The state cannot as easily as in the good old days of liberal capitalism present itself as neutral and above classes; it has to interfere drastically in the reproduction of the dominant relations of production and in doing so unveil its true character: its class character. The requirements of capital accumulation politicised all social relations. The growing socialisation of capital -not to be confused with the notion that the capital is becoming socialist- unravel its real essence: labour. Alongside the socialisation of capital runs the politicisation of the working class expressed in struggles over the essence of capital and not only in purely wage struggles. Industrial struggles during the recent decades have become more vigorous in challenging the basis of capital's reproduction: the process of production itself. According to classical Marxism, *work* in the form of *wage labour* is seen not only as

a means of subsistence but also as a means of the reproduction of capital.<sup>1</sup> Exploitation does not only take place in the factory. A *disciplined workforce* could only be created through a *disciplined society*, and this has become much more apparent now. Exploitation in the form of surplus value is not created solely during the market exchange between "free" and "equal" individuals who are buying and selling labour power. Before the "free" and "equal" individuals reach the market they have to be constituted as such and this is only possible if the relations of exploitation are spread throughout society. There are two forms of exploitation, one direct and the other indirect. Directly exploited are the direct producers, those immediately involved in the process of production, indirectly all the rest who help with their positive absence or negative presence in the reproduction of the exploitative system, for example housewives who by staying at home doing domestic labour free hands and brains to be exploited in the market place. Exploitation is the unsteady basis of this system so the potential for its overthrowing is always present in the process of its reproduction. *Exploitation* in this sense is a *social phenomenon* and not only an economic one although it is generated at the economic level. In this sense the category of class remains as central to British politics today.

Exploitation can only be fully understood in class terms. Other identities can more helpfully being understood in an interpersonal framework (religion, gender, ethnicity) and not as socially universal concepts; what they can produce are uncoordinated effects which do not have the power to challenge the system itself, but only particular deficiencies of the system. An organised system of exploitation can be challenged more successfully by an organised resistance of the exploited. All these struggles are related to the state as a class state and not as a neutral institution above classes which can be stormed by any class or group or groups who then will put it to work in their own interest. The capitalist state is organised as a class state having as a primary function the reproduction of the relations of production. An example relevant to the British case is the failure of Labourism to proceed even in its modest reformist way.

These are only a few instances of the relevance of Marxist analysis not only to an understanding of structures but also to their positive overcoming. Since all Marxist categories are categories of the inherent contradictions of a class ridden society, the only way of resolving these contradictions is the dissolving of the system that creates them.

This thesis has tried to show the different paths taken by the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain in their search for socialism which ironically met in

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<sup>1</sup>See Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol I, op. cit., p. 542; Karl Marx, *Wage, Price and Profit*, in Marx/Engels, *Selected Writings*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977.

the *cul de sac* of "New Times" - an end point from a socialist ideal. What it amounts to is a *Brave New World*<sup>1</sup> of a utopian vision of dehumanised modernity.

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<sup>1</sup>See Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Grafton Books, London, 1977 (c1932); Stuart Hall, "Brave New World", *Marxism Today*, October 1988.



## CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion we would like to recapitulate the main questions discussed in this thesis as well as the conclusions that we have reached.

We discussed the concepts of "revisionism" and "reformism" and their application to the British Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain. The concept of "revisionism" -although it was generated within the classical Marxist theory- applied equally to both above mentioned parties, that is, it was used more as an analytical rather than as an evaluative category. This methodological standpoint is explained by the very fact that the nature of "revisionism" in the Labour Party differed substantially in its application at the turn of the century from the one in the Communist Party although both parties nowadays occupy similar positions. The classifications "old" and "new" revisionism referred on the one hand to the need of identifying the historical era where they emerged and the inherent similarities they incorporate on the other.

In order to understand those developments we explored historically the transitional years 1956-1978 where the main issues in the debate of the attainment of socialism such as the role of the working class and the party were addressed. In the 1950s the most influential explanation of the electoral misfortunes of the Labour party was the so-called "erosion" of its base: the working class, claimed by theorists including Crosland, adopted middle class beliefs and attitudes as a result of the successful distributional policies of the post-war Labour administrations and consequently rethought its voting behaviour. The adoption of the *embourgeoisement* thesis in its social democratic variant, tried on the one hand to explain the changes in the capitalist system and to offer a theoretical framework for action on the other. What this theoretical approach did not seem to take into consideration is the underlining causes that make possible the development of one form instead of another, i.e. that the Keynesian Welfare State was not solely the outcome of a qualitatively changed capitalist system rather a response to changes in the process of production and their corresponding relations.

The *embourgeoisement* thesis is related to the debate on nationalisation which in the Labour party took the form of a controversy over Clause IV (4), the symbol of Labourism. Opponents of nationalisation i.e. of the extension of public ownership claimed that since people became more affluent due to the good workings of the system of "mixed economy" there was no further need for more state intervention in the public sector; opponents on the contrary did see public ownership more as an end in itself not a mere means to achieve a more equitable distribution of power and

wealth. The controversy ended, or one can say, postponed, with the defeat of the "old-revisionists" advocacies during the 1959 Labour Party Annual Conference. Clause IV (4) remained in the Constitution due to the trade unions fierce struggle against the attempts to revise "corporate" Morrisonian socialism as this was experienced in the immediate post-war years. But the battle of ideas in the Labour Party was far from over. The debates in the 1960s focused on the impact of new technology. The 1969 *In Place of Strife* proposed legislation re-heated the old debate on the relationship between a Labour administration, the state and the labour movement. Confrontational politics although desirable had to be abandoned because of the negotiating strength of the trade unions at that time. The lessons learned from the *In Place of Strife* experience were that the state could have been a better manager of class antagonism to the extent that it recognised that this antagonism existed. Corporatist policies were promised by the Labour Party in the so-called 1973 Social Contract, a document that recognised the state as one of the corporate interests in society alongside those of capital and labour. Tripartism failed and it was bound to fail because of its fundamental theoretical underpins, its belief in the prospect of concilability of those irreconcilable interests. What tripartism and old-revisionism have in common is their shared belief in the neutrality of the state. A critique of Wilsonism (the Wilson administration that implemented the policies of "technocratic collectivism", i.e., corporatism) was attempted by New Left writers including Miliband, Anderson and Nairn and from the broader Left inside and outside the Labour Party, the latter called for the development of an *Alternative Economic Strategy*, to correct the shortcomings of Keynesianism.

A discussion of the history of the Communist Party of Great Britain whose theoretical shifts from its self-proclaimed advocacy of Marxism towards Eurocommunism had a wider impact on the debates of socialism in Britain and in practice in influencing to a certain extent, some of the Labour Party's theoretical formulations.

The 1968 and 1977 *British Road to Socialism*, (Communist Party Programmes) were chosen as concrete examples of the official manifestation of the party's developments in relation to the concept of socialism and the means to achieve a socialist society. Since its first edition of the *British Road to Socialism*, in 1951, the Communist Party moved from a Soviet style socialist perception of Marxist theory and practice towards what Togliatti conceptualised as "polycentrism", that is the idea that the Communist movement should have a decentralised centre of reference, i. e. each Communist Party should be able to choose its own national road to socialism.

The 1968 *British Road to Socialism*, was published during the turmoil of an accelerated economic crisis in Britain and a rising protest movement against the shortcomings of both Soviet style Communism (e.g. Prague Spring) and Western style Capitalist democracy (e.g. Paris, May 1968; the "hot autumn" in Italy) those developments the 1968 Programme does not seem to address. Nevertheless, other important issues such as the nature of Britain's relationship with the European Economic Community (EEC), the latter seen as an alliance of big monopolies in Europe, and the Programme's call for Britain's withdrawal; the problem of the Labour - Communist relationship even in the form of an affiliation to the Labour party is raised. Possibly the central issue of the 1968 Programme is the discussion of alliances. By developing a broad definition of the working class and a critique of the present state based on the thesis of state monopoly capitalism, that is, that there is a fusion between the state apparatus and big monopolies which is damaging not only to the working class but to all those sections of society that affected by this formation, the Programme was able to elaborate on the issue of a Broad Popular (Democratic) Alliance between the working class and all the non-monopolistic class factions i.e. the petty-bourgeoisie and even sections of the bourgeoisie itself.

The issue of nationalisation was discussed in relation to socialist planning and also as serving not the interest of the class alone but to those of the whole community. This formulation should be seen in relation to the Communist Party's alliance strategies.

A peaceful road to socialism was reaffirmed in the Programme, against insurrectionary politics and in favour of parliamentarism which had to be supported by extra-parliamentary action if necessary, i.e. in the case of the ruling class' violent attempt to overthrow an elected socialist government. A commitment to parliamentary democracy was reaffirmed in the Programme's adoption of the sovereignty of parliament, the separation of powers, guarantee of democratic rights and of political pluralism against a one-party system of government.

Those ideas are extended in the 1977 *British Road to Socialism*. The 1977 Programme can be seen as the landmark of the official birth of Eurocommunism in Britain. A note on the main points of the Eurocommunist doctrine is given in the section in relation to the issues of democracy and the transition to socialism. The 1977 Programme was much more explicit in its rejection of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the need for a transitional type of state. The Programme adopts a neo-Gramscian analysis of the state seen it as a hegemonic bloc. The emphasis is placed on the superstructural level, that is on cultural and moral leadership which is accepted by the dominated classes precisely because of its

superiority. The 1977 Programme calls for the formation of a new historic bloc based on an alliance of the forces of labour and culture within the framework of a Broad Democratic Alliance which will struggle for hegemony.

Our main concern here was to give an historical account of the developments in the British Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain from their formation and especially from the 1950s up to 1978 and to relate them to their theoretical conceptions.

In order to answer the above questions we focused upon the theoretical background to ideological and policy changes in both the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain and given the importance of the so-called New Left intellectual movement in the development of theoretical positions that influenced both parties, a discussion of this "movement of ideas" became necessary.

The Fifties were a decade marked by radical reconstructions in both East and West. The de-Stalinisation process, the invasion of Hungary, the Anglo-French campaign in Suez, the formation of the so-called "post-war consensus" all these factors had their impact on the British Left's (re)thinking of socialism. The New Left 'movement of ideas' was as contradictory as the ideological drives of its founders. The exodus of a considerable number of Communist Party members after the refusal of the party leadership to condemn the invasion in Hungary (although the underlines causes are going much deeper, mainly in the party's stand on democratic centralism ) together with the disillusionment of a part of the broader left with the policies of the Labour Party are the most important elements in the foundation of the New Left who were united in one idea only, namely humanism and the achievement of socialism "here and now". The New Left current can be seen as a component part of the revisionist bloc in Britain, revisionism here being taken in terms of a re-thinking of the fundamentals of classical Marxism.

The New Left's contribution which is of interest in this thesis is their critique of Labourism as an inadequate strategy for socialist advance especially after the experience of "Wilsonism" in the 1960s.

A discussion of the concepts of democracy and parliamentarism, of the dictatorship of the proletariat for the advance to socialism, of the role of the state and social class as these issues were explored both in classical Marxism and in modern Marxist theories is also important for the understanding of the developments in the Communist Party and the analysis of "Thatcherism". Gramsci, Poulantzas and Aglietta's theories influenced to a great extent the theoretical developments of the British Left in this period, thus, an exposition of those parts of their theories which meant to play a role in the analyses in the 1980s was necessary.



The 1980s was the decade dominated by the phenomenon of "Thatcherism". Both the Labour Party and the Communist Party's theoreticians tried to grasp theoretically the underline causes of the emergence of "Thatcherism" and its initial success and subsequently to understand the reasons for the Labour Party's electoral misfortunes. "Thatcherism" seen by Hobsbawm as related to the crisis of the labour movement and, more specifically, to the dropping numbers of the manual working class which traditionally supposed to form the Labour Party's electoral basis. Thus, the need for an alliance strategy with the middle ground of politics which was equally affected by the Thatcherite policies of individualism. Hall analysed "Thatcherism" as authoritarian populism" that is placing the emphasis on the cultural/ideological level rather than the economic, a criticism forcefully voiced in Jessop's analysis of "Thatcherism" as a "two-nations project", although both Jessop and Hall are working within a neo-Gramscian framework of the concept of the state as a hegemonic bloc and both see the need for alliance strategies. To a certain extent the "old-revisionist" debates returned in the form of a "new-revisionism" this time the *embourgeoisement* thesis was applied not in conditions of affluence but of recession. The idea of class as a powerful point of reference disappeared in favour of a methodological individualism. The practical implications of these formulations can be seen in the developments both in the strictly political system (parties) and in the trade union movement where a "new realism" was adopted.

A Proclamation of "New Times", announced by both the Communist and the Labour Parties in their acceptance of the new conditions they found themselves in. The Communist Party in both *Facing Up To The Future* and *Manifesto for New Times*, saw a new mode of production emerging, a post-Fordist one. Changes in technology -from assembly line production to high-tech team work and flexibility- draw the boundaries of the new developments in the mode of existence. What the Communist Party saw as a shift from production to distribution/consumption made it reject the need for class politics, i.e. collectivities, and forced it to adopt an individualistic notion of socialism; people are individuals first and members of a collective -if they so wish- becomes secondary. This approach seems to contradict the classical Marxist analysis of classes and comes closer to the Weberian idea of class situation . The Communist Party's analysis of the nature of the state makes a shift from its Eurocommunist approach as a relation of forces towards that of an enabler of the expression of plural interests which is in line with the Party's group approach to the issue of class. Similar ideas were expressed by the Labour Party in its Policy Review Reports, in *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* and finally in *Looking to the Future* where individual choice and pluralism are seen as essential conditions of a

democratic citizenship secured within a semi-regulated market whose operations would be based on the principle of 'civic responsibility'. In both parties thinking the issue of the centrality of the "individual" reigns supreme and the idea of an empowering state becomes apparent.

In the 1980s the classical Marxist categories of analysis like exploitation, class, state and the advance to socialism were used in such a way as to justify the theoretical and practical shifts in the Communist Party and the broader Left intellectuals associated with this phenomenon. Especially the classical Marxist category of exploitation with its critical element was abandoned in the post-Marxist discourse and substituted by the categories of "oppression" and "domination". This development had as a result a change in the post-Marxists' strategy towards the construction of the "subject of change", which now is based on self rather than class consciousness. The move away from an analysis of the mechanics of the process of production towards the analysis of the realm of distribution made those theorists and parties prone to develop an individualistic notion of socialism and more than that to re-think the very idea of the need for a socialist transformation.

What this thesis tried to show, within its modest realm, was the need not to re-think the validity of the classical Marxist categories of analysis but the need for a re-thinking of the very methodological premises of both the "old" and the "new" revisionism's theoretical formulations.

And I would like to end this thesis with a quotation from Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction*, (1843-1844) which I believe captures quite well the nature of most of the attempts at a theoretical interpretation of our times.

History is thorough and passes through many stages while bearing an ancient form to its grave. The last stage of a world-historical form is its *comedy*...Why does history take this course? So that mankind may part *happily* from its past.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction*, (1843-1844), in *Early Writings*, op. cit., p. 247-8, emphasis in the original.

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